This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

D 1380 VIEW

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

D 1380

A

VIEW,

&c.

BY THE HONOURABLE THOMAS ERSKINE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

VIEW

OF THE

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

OF THE PRESENT

WAR WITH FRANCE.

BY THE HONOURABLE THOMAS ERSKINE.

THE THIRTY-THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT, PICCADILLY.

M,DCC,XCVII.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

A

VIEW,

&c.

ON the 26th of laſt December, his Majeſty by a gracious meſſage to both Houſes of Parliament, communicated with the utmoſt concern, the abrupt termination of the late negotiation with France, and directed the details of the embaſſy to be laid before them for their conſideration.

Upon this occaſion it appeared, that the negotiation had terminated upon a difference totally unconnected with the original cauſes of the war. It was manifeſt, that this country had completely abandoned the principles which, in the face of all Europe, the great confederacy againſt France had aſſigned as the juſtification of hoſtilities. The return of peace (now removed to an incalculable diſtance) turned entirely upon territorial ceſſions, neither in fact nor in principle conteſted at the time of the rupture, but which, as will appear by the following pages, were put at the feet

Digitized by Google

of Great Britain, as the arbitreſs of univerſal tranquillity.

This was our condition. The object of the conteſt totally ſunk, but the conteſt continuing without proſpect of concluſion; one hundred millions of debt added to the former grievous weight of national incumbrances; many channels of our commerce obſtructed, and our manufactures ſuffering in proportion; objects of revenue within the pale of luxury threatening unproduction from the neceſſity of extending them beyond what luxuries will carry; whilſt the ſinews of the laborious poor were cracking under the burdens already impoſed upon all the neceſſaries of life.

The Engliſh people had heretofore been characteriſed by an extreme jealouſy of their government; by a diſpoſition rather to magnify, and even to imagine evils, than to ſubmit without inquiry to actual and unexampled calamities. A great public ſenſation might, therefore, have been expected from ſuch a conjuncture; more eſpecially as the near approach of peace had been induſtriouſly circulated and anxiouſly anticipated; yet, as far as I have been able to inform myſelf, no public event of any magnitude ever appeared to be received with more perfect indifference and unconcern. Inſtead of any deſire to queſtion the prudence of the public councils, to review the paſt, or to provide for the future, it appeared to be more than ever the prevailing, and ſeemingly

ſeemingly exulting maxim, that government muſt be ſupported; mixed too with a conſiderable degree of bitterneſs againſt all who queſtioned its proceedings.

That government muſt be ſupported is a maxim juſt and incontrovertible, when properly underſtood. But the adminiſtration and the government have of late been confounded. A change in the one is conſidered as a ſubverſion of the other; and a diſpoſition to remove abuſes, under any regulations, is accounted, even by thoſe who admit and lament their exiſtence, as an attack upon the conſtitution which ſuffers from them.

It is from this wide-ſpread ſenſation that the authors of our preſent calamities are cheriſhed and ſupported, even by thoſe who condemn them; whilſt they, who with wiſdom and perſeverance have oppoſed all the meaſures which produced them, are diſcountenanced and diſtruſted.

Such an unnatural change in the feelings and characters of Engliſhmen has naturally given riſe to ſpeculations upon its cauſes. It is impoſſible to aſcribe it wholly either to the general increaſe of luxury, or to the enormous increaſe of the crown's influence: theſe are capable, indeed, of producing great changes in the public character, and are faſt producing them; but their march is too ſlow to have reached ſo ſuddenly to the pitch we are ar-

Digitized by Google

rived at. The ſtate of the public mind muſt therefore be otherwiſe accounted for, and another cauſe has accordingly been aſſigned for it---the phenomenon of the French revolution, and its mighty influence upon the higher orders of men. This is true in part: the French revolution is the cauſe, but not the only cauſe; it would have probably ſubſided quickly, and with conſequences extremely different, but for the cotemporary phenomenon of the power and character of the Britiſh miniſter.

Within all our memories another great revolution had taken place, ſcarcely leſs ſtriking and extraordinary, as it applied to alarm the government of Great Britain. The foundation of republican America had a ſimilar, if not an equal, tendency to produce the ſame diſpoſition in the people to an indiſcriminate ſupport of miniſters. If degrees of compariſons were neceſſary to my argument, I might aſſert, that the æra of the American war had even a more natural and obvious tendency than the later one in France to collect the landed and monied intereſt of England in a blind ſupport of the miniſters of the day.

The revolution in America, like the revolution of France, exhibited to the world the danger of ſuffering the general grievances of a people, real or imaginary, to remain unredreſſed; but with this ſtriking difference---the revolution in France was the ſubverſion of a foreign government; that of America was the deſtruction of our own: the diſcon-

tents

Digitized by Google

tents that provoked the French to reſiſtance were abuſes which could not be felt by Engliſhmen under any miſgovernment; but the Americans were revolted ſubjects, and the cauſe of their revolt was the abuſes and corruptions in our own conſtitution: the very abuſes and corruptions which are complained of to this hour. Yet ſo impoſſible is it to take any correct account of the events of the world, without attending to the characters of men who are the actors in them; ſo vain is it to think of tracing civil conſequences from their cauſes, as if we were dealing with the operations of matter, that, unleſs we look to the accidental impulſes ariſing from individual predominancy, we ſhould be conſtantly deceived. The American convulſion produced a ſenſation in England directly the reverſe of what is felt at this moment; and the ſame man gave to the two events, ſo calculated to have produced correſponding effects, a direction and conſequences diametrically oppoſite. With the one he rouſed the Britiſh democracy to threaten the corruptions of the other orders which had tainted and enſlaved it; with the other he now frightens the people into a ſurrender of their beſt privileges, and claims the title of an upright miniſter upon principles which he repeatedly and ſolemnly declared to be utterly inconſiſtent with the very exiſtence of an upright adminiſtration.

It may be ſaid, that the two revolutions were very different.—Very different indeed.—It is now too late

Digitized by Google

late to rail at or fight with the one, and our railing and fighting have created almoſt all the evils of the other. America and France began their revolutions upon the ſame principles, but with very different fortunes. America had no ancient internal ariſtocracy—France had nothing elſe. America had to contend with England only; a contention which gave her France to protect her: France had to contend againſt the world. When England had exhauſted and diſgraced herſelf, America was therefore free; but France had to exhauſt and diſgrace the world, and in the dreadful effort has been driven to extremities which frequently has diſgraced herſelf. But, with theſe accidental differences, the objects were the ſame: diſcontent occaſioned by abuſes produced both revolutions. Both governments might have continued monarchical, if corrupt power would have ſubmitted to correction: they are now both free repreſentative republics; and if corruption will not yet be corrected, let her look to herſelf.

During the firſt of theſe great æras, Mr. Pitt began his public life, under circumſtances ſo ſplendid and ſo honourable to himſelf, that, having no perſonal enmity towards him, it is painful to me to recur to them; indeed, if any part of what is written hereafter ſhall appear to be dictated by ſo unworthy a motive, I utterly and ſolemnly diſclaim it. I make no attack upon his private character; but the public exiſtence is at ſtake: Mr. Pitt is a miniſter in a moſt awful criſis: I feel a duty in examining his conduct

Digitized by Google

conduct in that capacity, and my public conduct in oppoſing him is equally open to the animadverſion of the world. It is only by looking back to the paſt that we can hope to correct the future; and when deluſion has overſpread a nation, the illumination of an angel would only darken it, unleſs the cauſes of it were firſt detected and expoſed. To obtain ſecurity for England, we muſt look back to the time when ſhe was at peace: we muſt examine the cauſes and progreſs of the war; muſt retrace all our ſteps, and look, if we dare, to what they lead.

Towards the cloſe of the American war, Mr. Pitt (a boy almoſt), ſaw the corrupt condition of Parliament, from the defect in the repreſentation of the people, with the eyes of a mature ſtateſman: the eagle eyes of his father had ſeen it before him, and the thunder of his eloquence had made it tremble. Lord Chatham had detected and expoſed the rank corruption of the Houſe of Commons as the ſole cauſe of that fatal quarrel, and left it as a legacy to his ſon to avenge and to correct it. The youthful exertions of Mr. Pitt were worthy of the delegation. —From my acquaintance with him, both before and upon his firſt entrance into public life, I have no doubt of his perfect ſincerity in the cauſe he then undertook; and the maturity of his judgment, even at that time, with which I was well acquainted, ſecures his conduct from the raſhneſs of unthinking youth. His efforts are in the memory of the whole public, and their miſcarriage at that time are not, in my opinion, to be imputed to him.

Digitized by Google

Corruption and abuſe, always uniform, oppoſed to Mr. Pitt's propoſitions of reformation the identical objections which, *under his own auſpices*, they oppoſe to all reformation now; and Parliament at that time, like the late Parliament, for motives which I leave to every man's own reflection, rejected reformation in all its ſhapes. Within the walls of the Houſe of Commons, the proprietors of boroughs expreſſed their indignation (as they have lately, and as they would to-morrow) that ſuch a prepoſterous time ſhould be choſen for alteration, however wiſe or regulated, as the concluſion of the American war; the empire, they ſaid, had been rent aſunder by the fermentation of political opinions; that our coloniſts had become republicans; and that if the door were once opened to changes, who ſhould preſcribe their limits?

Theſe arguments triumphed in the Houſe of Commons, but Mr. Pitt triumphed with the diſintereſted part of the nation. His arguments for chuſing that criſis were convincing and unanſwerable. The cauſe of reform was highly popular, and men of the greateſt rank and fortune took the lead in it. Irregularities of courſe were committed, but the public mind was ſound. Libels on Parliament at that time, as ſince, were written; but Mr. Pitt's were unqueſtionably the ſtrongeſt and the beſt. Public meetings, to take the ſenſe of the people upon the conduct of the Houſe of Commons in rejecting the propoſition, were univerſally promoted; but thoſe of Mr. Pitt, at the Thatched Houſe Tavern, (as might be expected from his talents

Digitized by Google

and

and the influence of his ſupporters) were by much the moſt ſyſtematical, and the moſt alarming to government.

Soon after this period Mr. Pitt became prime miniſter, an object of overſetting ambition for a very young perſon, and indeed, independently of that, it is but juſtice to remark, that whatever diſpoſition he might have had to ſerve the King, and rule the Britiſh Parliament, according to the liberal principles with which he began his public life, his Majeſty, without very eſſential changes, could not be ſo ſerved, nor a Britiſh Parliament be ſo conducted.

It would be unfair, in a publication addreſſed to the world, to preſume to trace the inſenſible changes in the mind of this miniſter upon the favourite object of his youth, the nurſe of his fame, and his conductor to power; I know enough of the corruptions inſeparable from the adminiſtration of a government which muſt be managed upon the principles of our own at preſent, to be able to make many allowances. It is enough for my preſent purpoſe, that Mr. Pitt firſt totally abandoned his own opinions, and afterwards became the oppoſer, and even the perſecutor of all who continued to preſerve them.

I will not leave it to his advocates to remark, that though he had indeed abandoned the cauſe of reform, yet that the condition of things was in ſome reſpects changed when he made his grand attack upon the

Digitized by Google

reformers: that the French revolution had intervened; that it had caused a great fermentation in the minds of men; that it appeared to have given to the zeal of some British reformers a tinge of republicanism; and that the effects and consequences of that great event had read an awful lesson to the world. Had Mr. Pitt acted with good faith upon these considerations, if he really entertained them, I know enough of the character of his understanding to believe that his conduct would have been different; and his original principle, on which he rested the whole of his memorable argument for the reform of Parliament, confirms me in that belief. Mr. Pitt's principle, illustrated by the American contest, was, that the holding high the abuses of government had been the foundation of all danger and violence to its authority. He would therefore have again brought forward the British constitution in its purity, as an antidote to republican speculations; confident that from his situation, and from the double hold he would have had by it over the nation, he might have given the spirit of reform his own direction, and moulded it to his own will. But unfortunately for England, he could not do this WITHOUT AT LEAST A TEMPORARY SACRIFICE OF HIS STATION AS MINISTER; Mr. Pitt, therefore, chose to remain in his station upon the only principles in which, without reform, it could possibly be maintained.

Having made this election, it is impossible, without the grossest injustice, to deny that he has conducted

Digitized by Google

ducted himself with masterly skill, and with a boldness without example in the history of the minister of any regular government. The enthusiasm for English reform, animated in its zeal from the struggles of the first reformers of France, when the Bastile fell, and when the Parliament of Paris opened its doors to the representatives of the nation, began to assume an energy of which wisdom and virtue might have taken the safe direction, but which, I admit, at the same time, required either to be managed by a liberal support from government, or to be checked in its excesses by a prudent and constitutional restraint. The British minister took neither of these courses. Too old in office to put his situation to hazard, by supporting the liberal principles which bestowed it; too bold and too strongly supported to employ caution in his remedy; embittered, perhaps, with the reflection of his own defection, and with the reproaches levelled at him, he seems to have resolved to cut the Gordian knot with a sword. Alarmed at the contagion of liberty from France, he determined to cut off all communication between the two nations, and to keep them separated at the chance, or rather the certainty, from his own creation, of a general war in Europe.

For this purpose the honest but irregular zeal of some societies, instituted for the reform of Parliament, furnished a seasonable but a contemptible pretext; they had sent congratulations to the French government when it had ceased to be monarchical:

Digitized by Google

in their correſpondencies through the country on the abuſes and corruptions of the Britiſh conſtitution, they had unfortunately mixed many ill-timed and extravagant encomiums upon the revolution of France, whilſt its practice, for the time, had broke looſe from the principles which deſerved them; and, in their juſt indignation towards the confederacies then forming in Europe, they wrote many ſevere ſtrictures againſt their monarchical eſtabliſhments, from which the mixed principles of our own government were not diſtinctly or prudently ſeparated. They wrote beſides, as an incitement to the reform of Parliament, many bitter obſervations upon the defective conſtitution, and the conſequent corruptions of the Houſe of Commons; ſome of which, according to the juſt theory of the law, were unqueſtionably libels.

Theſe irregularities and exceſſes were, for a conſiderable length of time, wholly overlooked by government. Mr. Paine's works had been extenſively and induſtriouſly circulated throughout England and Scotland; the correſpondencies, which above a year afterwards became the ſubject of the ſtate trials, had been printed in every newſpaper, and ſold without queſtion or interruption in every ſhop in the kingdom; when a circumſtance took place, not calculated, one would imagine, to have occaſioned any additional alarm to the country, but which (mixed with the effects on the public from Mr. Burke's firſt celebrated publication on the French Revo-

Digitized by Google

Revolution,) ſeems to have given riſe to the King's Proclamation, the firſt act of government regarding France and her affairs.

A few gentlemen, not above fifty in number, and conſiſting principally of perſons of rank, talents, and character, formed themſelves into a ſociety, under the name of the Friends of the People. They had obſerved with concern, as they profeſſed in the publiſhed motives of their aſſociation, the groſsly unequal repreſentation of the people in the Houſe of Commons; its effects upon the meaſures of government; but, above all, its apparent tendency to lower the dignity of Parliament, and to deprive it of the opinion of the people. Their avowed object was, therefore, to bring the very cauſe, which Mr. Pitt had ſo recently taken the lead in, fairly and reſpectfully before the Houſe of Commons; in hopes, as they declared, to tranquiliſe the agitated part of the public, to reſtore affection and reſpect for the legiſlature, ſo neceſſary to ſecure ſubmiſſion to its authority; and, by concentrating the views of all reformers to the preſervation of our invaluable conſtitution, to prevent that fermentation of political opinion, which the French revolution had undoubtedly given riſe to, from taking a republican direction in Great Britain.* Theſe were not only the profeſſed objects of this aſſociation, but the truth and good faith of

* I declare, upon my honour, theſe were my reaſons for becoming a member of that ſociety.

them

Digitized by Google

them received afterwards the ſanction of judicial authority, when their proceedings were brought forward by government in the courſe of the ſtate trials.

Nevertheleſs, on the very day that Mr. Grey, at the deſire of this ſmall ſociety, gave notice of his intended motion in the Houſe of Commons, there was an inſtantaneous movement amongſt miniſters, as if a great national conſpiracy had been diſcovered. No act of government appeared to have been in agitation before that period, although the correſpondencies before alluded to had, for months, been public and notorious, and there was ſcarcely an information, even for a libel, upon the file of the Court of King's Bench. Nevertheleſs, a council was almoſt immediately held, and his Majeſty was adviſed to iſſue his royal proclamation of the 21ſt of May, 1792, to rouſe the vigilance and attention of the magiſtrates throughout the kingdom to the vigorous diſcharge of their duties.

If this had been the only object of the proclamation, and if it had been followed up by no other proceedings than the ſuppreſſion of libels, and a coercive reſpect for the authorities of Parliament, it would have been happy for England; unfortunately it ſeemed to have other objects, which, if as a ſubject of the country I have no right to condemn, I may at leaſt, with the freedom of hiſtory, be now allowed to lament.

The

Digitized by Google

The proclamation had unqueſtionably for its object to ſpread the alarm againſt French principles; and, to do it effectually, all principles were conſidered as French by his Majeſty's miniſters which queſtioned the infallibility of their own government, or which looked towards the leaſt change in the repreſentation of the people in Parliament.

If it had iſſued, however, under the authority of the Britiſh miniſtry only, it probably could not have produced its important and unfortunate effects. But the miniſter, before he adviſed the meaſure, had taken care to ſecure the diſunion of the Whig party, which had hitherto firmly and uniformly oppoſed both the principles and practice of his adminiſtration. To this body I gloried to belong, as I ſtill do to cling even to the weather-beaten pieces of the wreck which remains of it. Neither am I aſhamed of the appellation of party, when the phraſe is properly underſtood; for without parties, cemented by the union of ſound principles, evil men and evil principles cannot be ſucceſsfully reſiſted. I flatter myſelf that the people of England will not haſtily believe, that I have ever been actuated in my public conduct by intereſt or ambition.

The Whig party, as it has been called, was inſignificant indeed from its numbers, and weak from the formidable influence of the crown in the hands of its adverſaries; but formidable, nevertheleſs, from illuſtrious rank, great property, and ſplendid talents;

Digitized by Google

talents; ſtill more from an opinion of public integrity, which formed a ſtrong hold upon the minds of the country. I look back with the moſt heart-felt and diſpiriting ſorrow to the diviſion of this little phalanx, whoſe union upon the principles which firſt bound them together might, in ſpite of differences of opinion in matters concerning which good men may fairly differ, have preſerved the peace of the world, re-animated the forms of our own conſtitution, and averted calamities, the end of which I tremble to think of. Reflecting, however, as I do, upon the frailties of human nature, adverting to the deceptions which may be practiſed upon it, and which men, by inſenſible degrees, unconſciouſly practiſe upon themſelves; compelled by candour to keep in view the unexampled criſis of the French revolution, the horrors which diſfigured it, the alarms inſeparable from it, but, above all, the dexterous artifices which it furniſhed to inflame and to miſlead; I wiſh to draw a veil over the ſtages which divided ſtateſmen and friends, at they very moment of all others when they ought to have drawn cloſer together, and when their union might have preſerved their country. I ſhall, therefore, content myſelf with obſerving, that before the King's Proclamation was iſſued, the ſupport of the Duke of Portland had not only probably been ſecured to it, but the aſſent of ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhed perſons in the oppoſition had been well underſtood to the whole of that ſyſtem of meaſures which ended in the war with France.

The

Digitized by Google

The proclamation, thus ſupported, was planted as the only genuine banner of loyalty throughout the kingdom; voluntary bodies, to ſtrengthen the executive power by maintaining proſecutions, were every where inſtituted. Society was rent aſunder, and the harmony and freedom of Engliſh manners were, for a ſeaſon, totally deſtroyed.

It was at this period that the ſeeds of war were ſown, which ever ſince we have been unfortunately reaping. Nothing is more diſtant from my temper, or my purpoſe, than to faſten the charge either of corruption or folly upon all who were ſeized with this alarm, or who even contributed to its propagation. Many worthy and intelligent perſons, ſuperior to common weakneſſes, and aloof from all meanneſs, were undoubtedly hurried away by its influence. It is far more pleaſant to me to hope, that many of thoſe who were active in ſpreading the deluſion were themſelves deluded, than to ſcatter imputation upon thouſands who may be wiſer and better than myſelf. The public, in a cooler hour, will be prepared to make the proper diſtinctions, and to ſeparate the innocent from the guilty. But the effects were not the leſs miſchievous, whatever might have been the motives; and the deluſion, however it may be yet diſguiſed by the cauſes which produced it, will appear in the future hiſtory of England as a blot in the annals of an enlightened age and of a free country.

Digitized by Google

The ſpirit which became prevalent about this time, which bore down every thing before it, and prepared the nation for war, was an abſolute horror of every thing connected with France, and even for liberty itſelf, becauſe France avowed to be contending for it. It confounded the caſual intemperance of an enlarged and warm zeal for the freedom and happineſs of mankind with a tendency to univerſal anarchy, and to a reſiſtance of all governments: it conſidered an irritable ſenſe of the evils attending the Chriſtian ſuperſtitions, and a complacency under their rapid declenſion, as a decided apoſtacy from the church, and as the ſure teſt of irreligion, and even of atheiſm itſelf. It ſet down as a declared enemy to monarchy, however exiſting by conſent, and poized, like our own, by the balances of a popular conſtitution, every man who did not throw up his cap when combined deſpotiſm was trampling upon the eſtabliſhments, and caſting lots for the territories of free men, or who dared to exult and triumph when a murderous manifeſto was thruſt down the throats of the tyrants who uttered it, and when a great people, determined to be free, ſucceeded in repelling the lawleſs invaders of their country.

Theſe were the feelings which miniſters at this period imputed to large claſſes of the people of Great Britain, and of our ſiſter kingdom.

The imputation was made with truth: the inference only was fallacious and wicked. If the well-founded

Digitized by Google

founded imputation of theſe ſenſations, and the habits of publicly expreſſing them, be political guilt, I for one plead guilty; and I thank God, above all his other bleſſings, that he has indelibly impreſſed them upon my underſtanding and my heart. But let us examine what were the public fruits of theſe dangerous emotions, which rendered it neceſſary to convert the nation, as it were, into a large priſon, by reſtrictive laws, by internal military ſtations, and by the ſeparations of external war.

Conſiderable bodies of the people were deſirous of ſtirring the queſtion of reform at a time when Mr. Pitt had laid it down, and the followers of the Duke of Richmond (then a cabinet miniſter of the King) were not only the moſt numerous, but were diſtinguiſhed by the lengths to which they ſeemed to puſh their views upon the ſubject; views which I admit to have been *very little ſhort* of thoſe which the Duke himſelf had avowed and acted upon a few years before.

Whilſt it continues to be the office of courts of juſtice to decide upon evidence, I ſhall maintain this to have been the extent of the deſigns which at the date of the proclamation, or which at any time afterwards, prevailed in this country. Not a man had been then convicted, nor has now, whilſt I am writing, for any treaſon againſt the ſtate, though the laws have been new caſt and manufactured to reach caſes which the venerable inſtitutions of our forefathers did

Digitized by Google

not touch; and no conſpiracy againſt the government had then, or has to this hour, been detected. Libels, indeed, both then and ſince, as at all other periods, were undoubtedly written by miſchievous, turbulent, and miſguided individuals. But the community at large was ſound, and the object which gave the real offence was virtuous and laudable. It was to reform the repreſentation of the Houſe of Commons, by the ways of the conſtitution, by an endeavour to collect the public ſentiment, and to produce it before Parliament. Three Engliſh juries determined this to have been the object, and the crown never invited a fourth to contradict them. The object, therefore, was virtuous and laudable; and if the conſtitution is to be preſerved, the renewed purſuit will alone preſerve it; and it might then have been ſecured without a ſtruggle, without a war with France, and without fear of her revolution—if thoſe who have the deepeſt intereſt in the ſtate had not been afraid of ENGLISH liberty.

I never ſhall be the defender of popular exceſſes, nor of commotions which can endanger the peace of my country; God forbid that I ſhould: but I know they never can ariſe, if men, who ſtand on the vantage ground in ſociety, will only behave with common honeſty and common ſenſe. It is not yet too late for the higher orders of this country to conſider well this ſubject. Let me implore them, while yet practicable, to give a ſafe direction to a ſpirit which neither Laws nor Wars will repreſs.

This

Digitized by Google

This ſpirit is at preſent high in Ireland, and the recent zeal of that brave and virtuous people has completely detected the falſe and pernicious calumnies upon both countries. It has demonſtrated that a deſire to reform abuſes in the government is not at all connected with diſloyalty to its eſtabliſhment, and that the reſtoration of a free conſtitution by the wiſdom and ſpirit of a nation has no alliance with, but, on the contrary, is utterly aborrent to a ſubmiſſion to foreign force.

The late attempt upon Ireland ought nevertheleſs to make the deepeſt impreſſion upon the government of England. The very ſenſation occaſioned by it, and our congratulations upon the ſupport of the elements, is in itſelf a condemnation of the meaſures purſued in that country.

If Ireland were conducted as ſhe ought to be, what dependence, in God's name, could we have to place upon the winds? Could a protective government of three millions of men, happy under the enjoyment of our free conſtitution, have occaſion to look to a weather-glaſs for its ſafety againſt twenty thouſand men? or could any thing but a hope of diſunion, held out to an enemy by the effects of a narrow policy, have ſuggeſted ſo weak and feeble an expedition?

This is a hope that will remain unextinguiſhed in France, and which may be expected to produce future and more dangerous expeditions, unleſs ſatisfaction

Digitized by Google

faction be given to the feelings of that country. It is a dangerous mode of reckoning, that becauſe the people have not manifeſted their diſcontent by inviting an enemy, they are therefore to be conſidered as contented; or, that their wiſhes may be the more ſafely neglected. It is juſtly obſerved by Locke, that nations, inſtead of being prone to reſiſt their governments without cauſe, require long continued neglect and provocation to rouſe them even to a reaſonable and juſtifiable reſiſtance. But he follows this obſervation by reminding the rulers of ſtates and kingdoms, that this diſpoſition leaves them neither juſtification nor protection when their authorities are ſubverted; and that the degree of diſguſt, which will at laſt ſurely overturn them, is not matter of ſafe or rational calculation: that the progreſs of diſaffection is inſenſible and inviſible, and that it is frequently hurried on to the fatal concluſion by accidents neither to be foreſeen nor reſiſted.

Theſe reflections ought to ſuggeſt the propriety of ſecuring this moſt valuable part of the empire from the poſſible danger of a better concerted attack. This ought to be done, not merely by more watchful operations (for I have purpoſely ſhunned all conſideration of the details of departments), but by ſetting the watch in the intereſts and affections of the Iriſh people.

Nothing can accompliſh this but the abſolute renunciation of that jealous and reſtrictive ſyſtem of government, which characteriſes the preſent adminiſtration

Digitized by Google

ſtration every where, but more than any where in that kingdom. To rule with ſecurity over that people, or over any other, in the preſent condition of the world, they muſt be ſet at their eaſe, and made happy by every indulgence within the compaſs of their government. To make the intereſt of ſupporting any civil eſtabliſhment univerſal, the privileges it confers muſt be made univerſal alſo. To inſpire the multitude with indignation at a foreign enemy, they muſt be made to feel practically the privileges which his invaſion ſtrikes at, and the ſocial bleſſings it would deſtroy.

It is ſaid, that when peace arrives it may be prudent to conſider theſe great objects. But without inſtant conſideration of them, peace may never arrive at all. If I had the princely dominion of Ireland, and were lord of all her ſoil, I would chooſe that moment for reforming her parliament, and for complete emancipation, when the enemy was plying upon her coaſts: not as acts of ſudden fear, but of ſound wiſdom and critical juſtice. To withhold from great bodies of a people the freeſt and fulleſt communications of all the privileges of their government when its exiſtence is externally threatened, is to bandage up the right arm when an enemy is approaching, and, by robbing it of its circulation, to deprive it of its ſtrength.

But the Iriſh people flocked with loyalty to the ſtandard of their country. For that very reaſon it

Digitized by Google

ſhould be crowned with the garland of conſtitutional freedom. Let the preſent moment be ſeized for making reformation a ſpontaneous act of liberal and enlightened policy, inſtead of being hereafter an act of cautious prudence, which may deſtroy its grace and effect. Let all the conceſſions of government in both countries be the conceſſions of wiſdom and beneficence; and not, as was happily expreſſed by a great writer, like the reſtitution of ſtolen goods. Let the people of both countries receive the greateſt degree of freedom which the true ſpirit of our conſtitution is capable of diſpenſing, and we may then ſmile at all invaſions, whatever reach of coaſt our enemies may poſſeſs. Under ſuch a ſyſtem, inſtead of riots and murmurings, by coercive acts of parliament, every man would be a volunteer with a courage which no mutiny bill can inſpire, and every houſe and cottage in Great Britain and Ireland would be a barrack for the ſoldiers of their country.

Theſe are unfortunately not abſtract and ſpeculative reflections; they would have been ſo formerly: but they are now taught by the awful times we live in. It is the uſe of hiſtory and obſervation to be a guide for the future.

It was a reſtrictive ſyſtem of government in Holland and the Netherlands, and the conſequent diviſions amongſt their inhabitants, that has ſuddenly altered the face of Europe by their ſubjugation, and it is the difference between the noble and independent pride

Digitized by Google

pride of a free government and the vaſſalage [illegible]n the bitrary power, that is wreſting at this moment [illegible]o it, the hands of the Emperor the ſceptre of his Itali[illegible]en-ſtates.

The French ſyſtem of fraternization, the effect of which we have ſeen with ſo much horror, could have had no other foundation. If the free governments which they ſubverted had not fallen off from the ends of their inſtitutions, their ſubverſions would have been impracticable, and the memorable decree of the 19th of November would have been the deriſion, inſtead of the terror of Europe.

I am ſorry indeed to remark, that this decree, and the ſyſtem of which it was a part, exiſted only upon paper, and in the inflammatory ſpeeches of enthuſiaſtic men, until confederated Europe began the actual and forcible fraternization of the monarchical part of France. When that nation had effected an internal revolution, no matter upon what principle or with what crimes, it ſhould have occurred to her invaders, who could not have looked to ſubjugation but by the diviſions of civil fury, that they were themſelves practically purſuing that very ſpecies of hoſtility, the theory only of which had been an object of their execration, and the foundation of their confederacy. The ſame reflection ought to have deterred Great Britain from the mercileſs and impolitic expedition to Quiberon. The government of France had then aſſumed a regular form, and was in the exerciſe of a regular le-

Digitized by Google

ed authority. The devoted handful of unhappy
tives from their country could do nothing by the
ord. The expedition, therefore, was to rekindle
he torch of diſcord amidſt twenty-five millions of
men beginning to eſcape from its former fury, and
ſettled under an eſtabliſhed government. Our inva-
ſion was to work by confuſion againſt eſtabliſhed
authority; to ſtir up all the elements of miſery and
miſchief amongſt the innocent part of the commu-
nity, incapable of underſtanding the cauſe for which
they fought, and without even the hope on our part
of protecting them from the fury of the government
againſt which they rebelled.

What was this proceeding but the very ſyſtem we
had imputed to France, and proclaimed with hor-
ror to the univerſe?

I hope, indeed, all civilized nations will hereafter
concur in ſtigmatiſing this horrible and barbarous
ſyſtem of hoſtilities: a ſtranger even to that heroiſm
which has unfortunately converted the crimes of con-
queſt into the moſt faſcinating triumphs of mankind.
It is a ſyſtem which is directed againſt the firſt
principle of ſocial honour and happineſs. It beats
up for every bad, degrading, and dangerous paſſion
of the human mind. It does not raiſe the open,
manly ſtandard of nation againſt nation, but in the
cowardice of warfare, which diſſolves its only inchant-
ment, divides a nation againſt itſelf. It makes up
an army of public crime and private diſcontent,
of

Digitized by Google

of honeſt error and falſe opinion, of deſperate [illegible] and virtuous poverty driven to deſperation. [illegible] ſets free the victims of the laws to impriſon and enſlave the ſtate; brings into the field againſt one another men whom the ſame land and the ſame fathers have bred, and which, inſtead of ſettling this horrible conflict by the cannon and the ſword, the ſhorteſt cure for the miſeries it has engendered, and extending no further than to the actual combatants, ſpreads wide the deſolation by the ſlower weapons of jealouſy and diſtruſt, of terror and vengeance; ſcowers the land with diſeaſe and famine, and by the deſtruction of public credit, public confidence, and public opinion, deſtroys for the preſent, and puts to the die of chance hereafter, the exiſtence and even the name of a country.

When my ſubject is attended to, I have no apology to make for this digreſſion. Indeed it can hardly be called one; becauſe the facts which gave riſe to it ſtand in their proper places as connected with the origin of the war againſt France, and becauſe the reflections from them are not ſpontaneous, being dictated by public duty to the hiſtorian of ſuch events.

The exceſſes which unfortunately diſtinguiſhed the French revolution, ſoon after the proclamation, further favoured the ſyſtem of antipathy againſt France, and the death of her unhappy monarch yet

Digitized by Google

ſho
fr nment for the juſtice of his cauſe; and, to re-
e all jealouſies reſpecting this country which had
n induſtriouſly circulated, Monſieur Chauvelin,
n his name, and by his authority, further declared,
" *that whatever might be the fate of arms in that war,*
" *France rejected all ideas of aggrandiſement; that ſhe*
" *would preſerve her liberty, her conſtitution, her un-*
" *alienable right of reforming herſelf whenever ſhe*
" *might think proper; that ſhe never would allow other*
" *powers to nouriſh a hope of dictating laws to her.*
" *But that that very pride, ſo natural and ſo juſt, was*
" *a ſure pledge to all the powers from whom ſhe ſhould*
" *receive no provocation, not only of her conſtant pa-*
" *cific diſpoſition, but alſo of the reſpect which France*
" *would ſhew at all times for the laws, the cuſtoms, and*
" *the forms of governments, of different nations.*"

As at this time much had been ſaid of attempts made by France to produce diſturbances in this country, the note further declared, " *that the French*
" *King deſired to have it known, that he would publicly*
" *and ſeverely diſavow all agents at foreign courts in*
" *peace with France, who ſhould dare to depart an inſtant*
" *from that reſpect, either by fomenting or favouring*
" *inſurrection againſt the eſtabliſhed order, or by inter-*
" *fering in any manner whatever in the interior policy of*
" *ſuch ſtates, under pretence of a proſelytiſm, which,*
" *exerciſed in the dominions of friendly powers, would be*
" *a real violation of the law of nations.*"

This

Digitized by Google

This note was dated, as I have obſerved, on the 12th of May, 1792. No anſwer was given to it, until the 24th of the ſame month, when Lord Grenville, paſſing by the cauſes of the war with the Emperor, declared, " *that Great Britain, faithful to her* " *engagements, would pay the ſtricteſt attention to pre-* " *ſerve that good underſtanding which ſo happily ſubſiſted* " *between his Majeſty and the Moſt Chriſtian King.*" But notwithſtanding this declaration, the royal proclamation had iſſued only three days before, and in the very interval between M. Chauvelin's note and this anſwer to it.

The proclamation, it is true, took no direct notice of France; and being an act of national police, France had, in ſtrictneſs, no right to complain of it. Yet the period of its iſſuing being ſo critical, M. Chauvelin repeated to Lord Grenville, the day afterwards, the aſſurances he had made on the 12th of May preceding; and in another letter, received by Lord Grenville in June, expreſſed himſelf as follows:.

" *If certain individuals of this country have eſtabliſhed* " *a correſpondence abroad, tending to excite troubles* " *therein, and if, as the proclamation ſeems to inſinuate,* " *certain Frenchmen have come into their views, that is* " *a proceeding wholly foreign to the French nation, to* " *the legiſlative body, to the King, and to his miniſters;* " *it is a proceeding of which they are entirely ignorant,* " *which militates againſt every principle of juſtice, and which*

Digitized by Google

" which, whenever it became known, would be uni-
" verſally condemned in France. Independently of thoſe
" principles of juſtice, from which a free people ought
" never to deviate, is it not evident, from a due con-
" ſideration of the true intereſts of the French nation,
" that ſhe ought to deſire the interior tranquillity, the
" continuance and the force of the conſtitution of a country
" which ſhe already looks upon as her natural ally? Is
" not this the only reaſonable wiſh which a people can form
" who ſees ſo many efforts united againſt its liberty?

" The miniſter plenipotentiary, deeply ſenſible of theſe
" truths, and of the maxims of univerſal morality upon
" which they are founded, had already repreſented them
" in an official note, which he tranſmitted to the Britiſh
" miniſtry the 15th of this month, by the expreſs orders
" of his court; and he thinks it his duty to repeat, on
" the preſent occaſion, the important declarations which
" it contains."

In the month of July, when the vaſt confederacy begun in Europe was more viſibly extending itſelf againſt France, M. Chauvelin, in the name of the French King, earneſtly applied for the mediation of Great Britain upon the ſubject. After ſtating the public proceedings of the different nations, the note concluded as follows:

" The ſteps taken by the cabinet of Vienna amongſt
" the different powers, and principally amongſt the allies
" of his Britannic Majeſty, in order to engage them in
" a quar-

Digitized by Google

" a quarrel which is foreign to them, are known to all " Europe. If public report even were to be credited, " its ſucceſſes at the court of Berlin prepare the way for " others in the United Provinces; the threats held out " to the different members of the Germanic body to make " them deviate from that wiſe neutrality which their " political ſituation, and their deareſt intereſts, preſcribe " to them; the arrangements taken with different ſove- " reigns of Italy, to determine them to act hoſtilely " againſt France; and, laſtly, the intrigues by which " Ruſſia has juſt been induced to arm againſt the conſti- " tution of Poland; every thing points out freſh marks " of a vaſt conſpiracy againſt free ſtates, which ſeems to " threaten to precipitate Europe in univerſal war.

" The conſequences of ſuch a conſpiracy, formed by " the concurrence of powers who have been ſo long rivals, " will be eaſily felt by his Britannic Majeſty: the balance " of Europe, the independence of the different powers, the " general peace, every conſideration which at all times " has fixed the attention of the Engliſh government, is " at once expoſed and threatened.

" The King of the French preſents theſe ſerious and " important conſiderations to the ſolicitude and to the " friendſhip of his Britannic Majeſty. Strongly pene- " trated with the marks of intereſt and of affection which " he has received from him; he invites him to ſeek, in " his wiſdom, in his ſituation, and in his influence, means " compatible with the independence of the French nation, " to ſtop, whilſt it is ſtill time, the progreſs of that con-

Digitized by Google

" federacy, which equally threatens the peace, the li-
" berty, the happineſs of Europe, and, above all, to
" diſſuade from all acceſſion to this project thoſe of his
" allies whom it may be wiſhed to draw into it, or who
" may have been already drawn into it from fear, ſe-
" duction, and different pretexts of the falſeſt as well as
" of the moſt odious policy."

This application was anſwered by Lord Grenville on the 8th of July, in which, after repeating former aſſurances of friendſhip towards France, and of a diſpoſition to maintain the happy harmony which ſubſiſted between the two empires, the propoſed mediation was refuſed in the following words:

" His Majeſty will never refuſe to concur in the pre-
" ſervation or re-eſtabliſhment of peace between the other
" powers of Europe, by ſuch means as are proper to pro-
" duce that effect, and are compatible with his dignity,
" and with the principles which govern his conduct.
" But the ſame ſentiments which have determined him
" not to take a part in the internal affairs of France,
" ought equally to induce him to reſpect the rights and
" the independence of other ſovereigns, and eſpecially
" thoſe of the allies; and his Majeſty has thought that,
" in the exiſting circumſtances of the war now begun,
" the intervention of his councils, or of his good offices,
" cannot be of uſe, unleſs they ſhould be deſired by all the
" parties intereſted."

The

Digitized by Google

The ſame determination, not to interfere with the internal affairs of France, was repeated only a few days before M. Chauvelin was ordered to quit the kingdom, under the circumſtances of direct interference which will preſently appear to have attended his diſmiſſion: and the refuſal to mediate with the Emperor for the reſtoration of peace was given but a ſhort time before we involved Holland in the horrors of war, without being deſired to intermeddle in her affairs.

This proceeding, which terminated all hopes of tranquillity in Europe, furniſhes the true cypher to explain every ſucceeding act of his Majeſty's preſent councils. We ſhall find them uniformly and ſcrupulouſly obſervant of the moſt novel punctilios, which could furniſh the ſmalleſt pretence for repelling peace, but overleaping every rule hitherto adopted by regular governments in ſeeking a juſtification for war.

Soon after this, the unhappy King of France was deprived of the functions of government, and Lord Gower was recalled from Paris; but M. Chauvelin was ſtill continued by France at the court of London, although he was no longer acknowledged as her ambaſſador: a pretty ſtrong proof that ſhe was not then deſirous of ſeeking a cauſe of quarrel.

Digitized by Google

Though M. Chauvelin was now in a manner a private man, yet the correſpondence nevertheleſs continued with the ſecretary of ſtate; and it appears, by refer ing to it, that the charges made by this country to the conduct of France were principally theſe:

A meditated attack upon Holland, and at all events a violation of her rights, notwithſtanding her neutrality, by the proceedings of the Convention reſpecting the Scheldt, and the opening a paſſage through it to attack the citadel of Antwerp; the French invaſion and poſſeſſion of the Netherlands, and the encouragement given to revolt in other countries, not only by emiſſaries in this country, but by the decree of the 19th of November, which contained a formal declaration to extend univerſally the new principles of government adopted in France, and to encourage revolt in all countries, even in thoſe which were neutral.

M. Chauvelin had explained himſelf upon theſe ſubjects in the early part of the correſpondence: but as his formal character of ambaſſador was then conſidered to be vacated, I purpoſely paſs them over, becauſe they were afterwards formally repeated, and nearly in the ſame words, when M. Chauvelin, in January, 1793, preſented his letters of credence from the executive council of France, the acceptance of which were formally refuſed by Lord Grenville.

In

Digitized by Google

In this note the executive council again in terms declared, "*that France would reſpect the ſafety of all "nations whilſt they preſerved their neutrality; that ſhe "had before renounced, and again renounced, every con- "queſt; and that her occupation of the Low Countries "ſhould only continue during the war, and the time "which might be neceſſary for the Belgians to conſoli- "date their liberties; after which let them be happy, "France would find her recompence in their felicity.*"

With regard to the Scheldt, ſhe conſidered that as a matter between England and Belgium, as independent nations, upon the principle of her former declaration regarding that country, expreſſing herſelf thus:

"*The executive council declares, not with a view of "yielding to ſome expreſſions of threatening language, but "ſolely to render homage to truth, that the French re- "public does not intend to erect itſelf into an univerſal "arbitrator of the treaties which bind nations. She "will know how to reſpect other governments, as ſhe will "take care to make her own reſpected. She does not "wiſh to impoſe laws upon any one, and will not ſuffer "any one to impoſe laws upon her. She has renounced, "and again renounces every conqueſt; and her occupation "of the Low Countries ſhall only continue during "the war, and the time which may be neceſſary to the "Belgians to inſure and conſolidate their liberty; after "which let them be independent and happy, France will "find her recompence in their felicity.*

"*When*

Digitized by Google

" *When that nation ſhall be found in the full enjoy-*
" *ment of liberty, when its general will can lawfully de-*
" *clare itſelf without ſhackles, then if England and Hol-*
" *land ſtill attach ſome importance to the opening of the*
" *Scheldt, they may put the affair into a direct negotia-*
" *tion with Belgium. If the Belgians, by any motive*
" *whatever, conſent to deprive themſelves of the navi-*
" *gation of the Scheldt, France will not oppoſe it; ſhe*
" *will know how to reſpect their independence, even in*
" *their errors.*"

The charge of encouraging ſedition againſt governments ſhe again repelled with indignation in the language of her former declarations on the ſubject, and diſavowed the conſtruction put upon the decree of the 19th of November, qualifying and explaining it as follows:

" *We have ſaid, and we deſire to repeat it, that the*
" *decree of the 19th of November could not have any*
" *application, unleſs to the ſingle caſe in which the ge-*
" *neral will of the nation, clearly and unequivocally ex-*
" *preſſed, ſhould call the French nation to its aſſiſtance*
" *and fraternity. Sedition can certainly never be con-*
" *ſtrued into the general will. Theſe two ideas mutually*
" *repel each other, ſince a ſedition is not, and cannot be*
" *any other than the movement of a ſmall number againſt*
" *the nation at large; and this movement would ceaſe to*
" *be ſeditious, provided all the members of a ſociety ſhould*
" *at once riſe, either to correct their government, or to*
" *change its form in toto, or for any other object.*

" *The*

Digitized by Google

" The Dutch were aſſuredly not ſeditious, when they " formed the generous reſolution of ſhaking off the yoke of " Spain; and when the general will of that nation called " for the aſſiſtance of France, it was not reputed a crime " in Henry the Fourth, or in Elizabeth of England, to " have liſtened to them. The knowledge of the general " will is the only baſis of the tranſactions of nations with " each other; and we can only treat with any government " whatever on this principle, that ſuch a government is " deemed the organ of the general will of the nation go- " verned.

" Thus, when by this natural interpretation the decree " of the 19th of November is reduced to what it truly im- " plies, it will be found that it announces nothing more " than an act of the general will, and that beyond any " doubt, and ſo effectually founded in right, that it was " ſcarcely worth the trouble to expreſs it. On this ac- " count, the executive council thinks that the evidence of " this right might, perhaps, have been diſpenſed with by " the National Convention, and did not deſerve to be " made the object of a particular decree. But with the " interpretation which precedes it, it cannot give uneaſi- " neſs to any nation whatever."

Having adverted to all the material parts of the correſpondence, I deſire very diſtinctly to be underſtood, that I am not undertaking the juſtification of the conduct of France, at this period, though I ſhall ever think her " more ſinned againſt than ſinning." With regard to this decree of the 19th of November,

no

Digitized by Google

no conſiderate perſon can juſtify it: becauſe there is a great difference between one nation giving PARTICULAR aſſiſtance to another which is oppreſſed by its government, as King William did to England, and a GENERAL proſpective declaration, ſuch as is contained in the decree of the 19th of November, and which became more hoſtile to the peace of other nations, as being iſſued upon the eve of a great revolution which naturally affected the temper and feelings of mankind. Neither do I ſeek to maintain that England ſhould have reſted ſecure from the explanation of the other points in difference, as they are explained in this correſpondence, much leſs that ſhe ſhould have relied upon the ſincerity of them, or the durability of French councils, to give ſincerity its effect. Theſe are matters of fair political controverſy, which I purpoſely avoid; but I hazard the aſſertion, that common policy and common ſenſe abſolutely enjoined that they ſhould either have been made the inſtant foundations of war, as aggreſſions which admitted no ſettlement, or the ſubject of negotiation upon terms conſiſtent with dignity and ſafety.

But, unfortunately, neither of theſe courſes were purſued. We neither made war upon theſe aggreſſions, which might have led to a termination of it upon their removal, nor would we conſent to put their removal into a train of amicable negotiation.

The letters of credence ſent by the republic were refuſed, not becauſe of theſe enumerated ag-

 greſſions,

Digitized by Google

greſſions, or of any other, but becauſe ſhe was a republic; and in a few days afterwards, Monſieur Chauvelin, who preſented them, was alſo diſmiſſed from the kingdom; not becauſe the anſwers of his government were declared unſatisfactory on the points objected to, but becauſe the French monarchy had been finally terminated by the deſtruction of their King. On that account ſolely Monſieur Chauvelin was directed, on the 24th of January, 1793, to quit this kingdom; the King having declared by the ſecretary of ſtate, "*That after ſuch an "event, his Majeſty could no longer permit his reſidence "here.*" And the communication of that order to the Parliament on the 28th of January following, expreſſly ſtated his diſmiſſion to be "*on account of "the late atrocious act perpetrated at Paris.*"

Before this period, France was, undoubtedly, ſolicitous for peace. She had done none of the acts complained of in the correſpondence, until her independence had been threatened by a hoſtile confederacy. She had prayed the mediation of Great Britain to diſſolve that confederacy, and to avert its conſequences. She had diſavowed conqueſt and aggrandizement; and the only ſteps ſhe had taken inconſiſtent with that declaration, were invaſions of the territories of princes confederating or confederated againſt her. She offered to reſpect the neutrality of Holland, and ſolemnly diſavowed every act or intention to diſturb the government of Great Britain.

Digitized by Google

This poſture of things, which, if not wholly ſatiſfactory, was certainly a poſture for amicable and commanding ſettlement, the Britiſh government thus diſturbed by an act which may be termed an interference with the internal government of France; accompanied beſides with what cannot well be denied to be an inſult by thoſe who maintain THAT LORD MALMESBURY WAS INSULTED. Monſieur Chauvelin was diſmiſſed from this kingdom, not as Lord Malmeſbury was from France, becauſe his terms of negotiation were inadmiſſible; but becauſe no intercourſe *upon any terms* could be admitted to a nation which with cruelty or injuſtice had put her king to death. I am not juſtifying or extenuating the REGICIDE — but what had this nation, AS A NATION, to do with it? Would any one of thoſe who, in conſidering it as a murder to be avenged by England, have been acceſſary to the deaths of above a million of innocent unoffending men, and to the miſery and devaſtation of Europe, venture now to conſider it as a freſh cauſe of hoſtilities, if all the crowned heads in Europe were to be cut of by their ſubjects?—I believe not. Indeed ſuch a cauſe of war has been ſince abandoned; but by what ſtages, upon what principles, and with what conſequences, I ſhall examine hereafter.

In this ſtate of things the king met the parliament on the 12th of December, 1792: when notwithſtanding the conciliatory declarations detailed in the preceding correſpondence *(to the whole of which parliament was ſtill an entire ſtranger)*, his Majeſty was adviſed

Digitized by Google

viſed by his miniſters to repeat the ſame three direct charges againſt France, which had been before made to her ambaſſador, and upon the footing of theſe complaints, without ſubmitting the anſwers which had been given to them to the conſideration of parliament, they called upon the country to enable them to augment our forces, and mixed in their addreſs to the throne, but ſtill more in the debates which led to it, a language of reproach and inſult wholly unexampled in the proceeding of any public council to the government of an independent nation.

To ſave the country ruſhing down this precipice of ruin in the phrenzy of alarm, which every nerve of government had been ſtrained to propagate, Mr. Fox, on the 15th of December, when the Speaker of the Houſe of Commons had reported the King's anſwer to the addreſs of the Houſe, and whilſt M. Chauvelin was yet in England, propoſed, "*That "an humble addreſs ſhould be preſented to his Majeſty, "praying that he would be pleaſed to appoint a miniſter "to be ſent to Paris* TO TREAT WITH THE PERSONS "EXERCISING PROVISIONALLY THE FUNCTIONS OF "GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE, *touching ſuch points as "might be in difference between his Majeſty and his "allies and the French nation.*"

At this time the French government had done no one act which even miniſters themſelves conſidered as a foundation for war; ſince war was not even propoſed in the King's ſpeech; but, on the contrary,

Digitized by Google

the correſpondence *not then diſcloſed to the Houſe, which was going on at this very period,* continued to expreſs THE MOST PACIFIC DISPOSITIONS.

The propoſition was therefore the moſt important in point of matter, and the moſt critical in point of time, ever offered to the conſideration of parliament, and it was made in a manner the moſt ſimple and affecting; afraid of irritating where the object was to perſuade, and ſubdued by the dreadfully impending calamities, Mr. Fox put the rein upon that overpowering eloquence which ſo eminently diſtinguiſhes him, and in a very few, plain, unanſwerable ſentences, beſeeched the Houſe to try the effect of negotiation before ſteps were taken which would inevitably bring on hoſtilities: to prepare with vigour and firmneſs for war, but with prudence and gentleneſs to cultivate peace.

When this propoſition was made, THE ANNEXATION OF BELGIUM, now the main obſtacle to peace, was diſavowed by France; and, as ſhe was a ſuitor to us beſides for our mediation with the Emperor, it is eaſy to ſee how ſure the road was to its return to its former government. The ſecurity of Holland, whilſt ſhe perſerved her neutrality, was profeſſed, and in a manner guarantied. The ancient limits of France were propoſed as her dominion, and implicit reſpect was manifeſted to the independence and conſtitutions of other nations. Yet ſo irreſiſtible was the force of deluſion and infatuation, that Mr. Fox's pro-

poſition,

Digitized by Google

poſition, though its object was to ſecure every thing whilſt it conceded nothing, and though it came from a perſon long the favourite, and with all its leanings ſtill the favourite of the Houſe of Commons, yet it was received amidſt almoſt univerſal burſts of diſapprobation, ſcarcely indeed with the obſervances of parliamentary decorum. Some perſons long attached to this great man, by friendſhip as well as opinion, ſeemed to forget their reverence for his talents and integrity, and one went the length of lamenting *even* his *former* political attachment to him.

For having made this propoſition I will not vindicate Mr. Fox; his own eloquent and maſterly vindication of it, his predictions, too fatally accompliſhed, and the groans of a ſuffering world, bear awful teſtimony for him.

At the time this motion was made, the correſpondence between Lord Grenville and M. Chauvelin being ſtill kept back from the Houſe of Commons, Mr. Fox himſelf did not know the additional foundations he had for his propoſition: it reſted upon his own wiſe forecaſt at the time he made it; but, in a few days afterwards, the whole details were communicated by a meſſage from the King,* and the late Houſe of Commons found in the ſubmiſſive propoſitions of France *(which they did not know of*

* See the King's meſſage to the Houſe of Commons, Jan. 28th, 1793.

when

Digitized by Google

when they refuſed negotiating) an additional juſtification for the war. They thanked his Majeſty for his gracious communication, and pledged their lives and fortunes to ſupport hoſtilities.

It is impoſſible not to pauſe here, for a moment, to contemplate the probable conſequences, if we had attended to the counſels of this exalted and diſintereſted ſtateſman at that critical and momentous period.

The regular governments of Europe, as if they were one power, ſurrounded Great Britain with unbroken force and reſources; a confederacy which would have been infinitely more awful and commanding, if the principles of its union had only been common ſecurity. Had Great Britain, the firſt amongſt the nations, and enjoying herſelf a free conſtitution, accepted the offer of being the arbitreſs of the repoſe of Europe, with what a commanding voice might ſhe have ſpoken to France whilſt her factions were tearing one another to pieces, and her government could ſcarcely ſupport itſelf during peace!

If, inſtead of inciting and encouraging the princes of Europe to invade France, for the purpoſe of diſſolving her eſtabliſhment, we had become her ſecurity againſt their invaſions, whilſt her revolution ſhould be confined to her own limits and ſubjects, it is not poſſible to believe upon any reaſoning from human life or experience, that Europe could have now been in its preſent condition. But if, inſtead of this *paſſive* and

Digitized by Google

and *merely preventive* influence, Great Britain, in the true ſpirit and in the full ripeneſs of civil wiſdom, had felt a juſt and generous compaſſion for the ſufferings of the French people; if, ſeeing them thirſting for liberty, but ignorant of the thouſand difficulties which attend its eſtabliſhment, ſhe had taken a friendly, yet a commanding part; if, not contenting herſelf with a cold acknowledgment of the king of the French, by the inſidious forms of an embaſſy, ſhe had become the faithful, but at the ſame time the cautious protector of the firſt revolution; if ſhe had put the rein upon Europe to prevent its interference, inſtead of countenancing the confederacy of its powers againſt it, the unhappy Louis might now have been reigning, according to his oath, over a free people; the horrors of ſucceeding revolutions might have been averted, and much of that rival jealouſy, the ſcourge of both nations for ſo many centuries, might, without affecting the happy balances of our mixed conſtitution, have been gradually and happily extinguiſhed.

The powers that then exiſted in France, however inſincere, or however unſettled in their authority, having proffered the continuance of peace, and having aſked our mediation with the Emperor, upon the renunciation of conqueſt and aggrandizement, and upon the diſavowal of interference with the governments of other countries, WE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THEM AT THEIR WORDS. The poſſible inſincerity of the offer, or the weakneſs of perhaps an expiring faction

Digitized by Google

faction to give it efficacy, would have only added to the predominancy of Great Britain. The magnanimous and beneficent conduct of a powerful nation poſſeſſing a free government, admitting the right of another nation to be free, offering its countenance to *rational* freedom, lamenting the departure from its true principles, and demanding only ſecurity againſt its influence to diſturb herſelf, would have been irreſiſtible in its effects. Amidſt the tyrannies of quick ſucceeding factions, the united force of this country and her allies exerted upon ſuch a ſound principle, and thrown into the ſcale of any party in France that might have been willing to preſerve the peace, would have given to that party an overruling aſcendancy.

This is ſo true, that we know the ſhare which even Briſſot had in the commencement of hoſtilities, amidſt all the provocations to them, was the principal cauſe of his deſtruction, and the root of Robeſpierre's popularity, which enabled him to become the tyrant of France. Nothing, indeed, could have withſtood, in the ſentiments of that nation, the ſtriking and ſalutary contraſt between being left to the conſolidation of her own conſtitution, without any obſtacle but the vices and paſſions of her own ſubjects, and the wilful provocation of the whole civilized world encompaſſing her territories with a force apparently ſufficient to cruſh to pieces her eſtabliſhment, even if it had not been tottering upon its own baſis from internal cauſes.

Digitized by Google

But ſuppoſing the practicability, or the effects of ſuch a ſyſtem in Great Britain to be altogether falſe and viſionary; admitting, for the ſake of argument, that the agitation of the French Revolution was too violent, and its principles, from the very beginning, too diſorganiſing and miſchievous for regular governments, under any reſtraints, to have intermeddled with or even acknowledged, nothing would follow from the admiſſion in favour of the war; becauſe a ſincere yet armed neutrality on the part of Europe would have been the ſureſt and the moſt obvious courſe for diſſolving the new republic, or, at all events, of recalling it the ſooneſt to ſome ſocial order of things.

France was at that time (according to the authors of the war) torn to pieces by the moſt furious and nearly balanced factions, which made her government a mere phantom, competent only to evil, and incapable of good. Be it ſo.—For that very reaſon we ſhould have obſerved the moſt perfect, and even the moſt ſoothing neutrality. Heterogeneous bodies, having no principle of union capable of conſtituting a ſubſtance, and which, if left to themſelves, would ſeparate and diſperſe, may be bound together by external force, and paſſed through the furnace till they unite and incorporate. This was preciſely the caſe with France. She was rent aſunder by the internal diviſions of her own people, but cemented again by the conſpiracy of kings. Her great leaders were banded againſt each

Digitized by Google

other, not only from the moſt deadly hatred and the luſt of dominion, but ſeparated by the moſt extravagant zeal for contradictory theories of government, whilſt the people were toſſed to and fro, the alternate victims of repugnant and deſolating changes. In this unexampled criſis, perſons, capable upon other occaſions of judging with accuracy and acuteneſs, were looking by every mail for the utter deſtruction of the French government; but they had loſt the clue to the myſtery, or rather to the plain principle which preſerved it: the Britiſh miniſter was the guardian angel that hovered over France, and the ſole creator of her ominous and portentous ſtrength. The neceſſity of reſiſting by combination the external war with which he ſurrounded her, counteracted the ſeparation ariſing from her internal commotions. It raiſed up a proud, warlike, and ſuperior ſpirit, at the call of national independence, too ſtrong for the inferior ſpirits, whoſe inchantments were diſſolving her as a nation; and by the operation of the ſimpleſt principles of unalterable and univerſal nature, rather than from any thing peculiar in the characteriſtic of Frenchmen, conſolidated her mighty republic, and exhibited a career of conqueſt and glory unequalled in the annals of mankind.

In the ſame manner the cruel confiſcations and judicial murders, which, under the ſame tyrannies deſtroying one another, diſgraced the earlier periods of the republican revolution, may be mainly aſcribed to the ſame predominant cauſes. If France had been

Digitized by Google

left by other nations to the good or evil of her own changes, the proſcriptions which prevailed for a long ſeaſon could not have exiſted in the ſame extent in any civiliſed nation, nor even in a nation of human beings: but the reign of terror (as it was well called) muſt be always a reign of blood, becauſe there is no principle of the human mind ſo mean or ſo mercileſs as fear. In proportion, therefore, as the government of France was ſhaking by external conſpiracies, and trembling for its exiſtence, it became of courſe more ſubject to internal agitation by the revolts of its own ſubjects. Had it not therefore been for our unhappy interference, royaliſts of the old ſchool, and royaliſts of the monarchical revolution, bending before the ſtorm of national opinion, and ſeeing no great ſtandard hoiſted for their protection, would have really or ſeemingly acquieſced in the new order of things; they would have given little offence or jealouſy to the ſtate, and, what is far more important, the ſtate itſelf, unimpelled by the terrors of revolt and the expences of war, would not have had the ſame irreſiſtible motives for ſeizing upon the perſons and property of its ſubjects; and thus numerous claſſes of men, poſſeſſing dignities and property, which have been chaſed from their country, or ſwept off the face of the earth, would have remained within the boſom of France, inactive, indeed, for the preſent, but whoſe ſilent and progreſſive influence hereafter might have greatly affected the temper, if not the form of the government, at no very diſtant period.

Digitized by Google

This was precisely the case in England upon the death of Charles the First: the nobles and great men of the realm submitted to the protectorship of Cromwell, and Europe acquiesced in it. Cromwell, therefore, executed his authority according to the new forms, but without any system of proscription. The high men of the former period continued to exist, and with all the influences of property, which remained with its ancient possessors; the monarchy might, therefore, be said to have been rather in abeyance than abolished, and when the return of Charles was planned and executed, every thing stood in its place, and conspired to favour his restoration. But if the nations of Europe had then unsuccessfully combined to restore monarchy in England, as they have lately to restore it in France, the consequences would have been exactly similar. The monarchical party in England would have undoubtedly flocked to the standard: they would have endeavoured by force, or by intrigue, to dissolve the commonwealth; those who were taken would have been executed as traitors; others would have been driven out of England as emigrants; their great estates would have passed into other hands; a title to them would have been made by the new government to those who, as in France, became the creditors of the public during an exhausting war; the whole body of nobility and great landed proprietors would have perished in England; and Charles the Second could no more have landed at Dover than Louis the Eighteenth could offer himself before Calais at this moment.

It

Digitized by Google

It may be aſked, why the ſagacity of that arch ſtateſman Cromwell did not foreſee the conſequences I have appealed to? and the application of my whole argument is concluded, and becomes invulnerable by the anſwer. The anſwer is—he could not do it. The powers of Europe and his own ſubjects, through their interference, did not furniſh him with the occaſion. Neither in England, nor in France, nor in any other country, will men bear bloody murders, or cruel confiſcations, but under the preſſure of ſome actual or apparent neceſſity to form the tyrant's plea. This plauſible and unfortunate plea was given by confederated Europe, but principally by England, to the tyrants of France; and thus the Republic became not only conſolidated for the preſent, but the return of ſuch a ſtate of things was inevitably prevented, as might have led to a reſtoration in France like that which followed the commonwealth in England.

In the firſt ſtages of the revolution, the French people, like the Engliſh in the laſt century, had no intereſt in their government more ſolid, nor more permanent, than the theories which had given it birth. The French Republic, therefore, like the Engliſh commonwealth, had but a precarious and doubtful foundation. But how ſtands it now, in conſequence of our unprincipled and impolitic interference? It ſtands upon a rock.—It exiſts no longer from force, but from will. It depends no longer upon opinion, but leans upon intereſt; and not merely upon that general intereſt, which, after a ſtate of

Digitized by Google

of great agitation, naturally inclines a nation to reſt, but upon a particular and individual intereſt univerſally ſpread. The very exiſtence of all claſſes of the people now depends wholly upon the power and the continuance of the ſtate. There is ſcarcely any property in France, real or perſonal, which, in the hands of the preſent poſſeſſors, has any other foundation. There is no ancient undiſputed poſſeſſion of land, which has ever been a title in moſt changes of human governments: there is no money, which may be buried till the ſtorm is overblown. On the contrary, the land is almoſt univerſally held by the public creditors againſt the former poſſeſſors, either under a ſale from the government, or as a pledge for money lent to it; and the paper currency of the nation (which is its perſonal eſtate) may, without loſs to the proprietors, be torn into a thouſand pieces, unleſs the Republic continues to be ONE AND INDIVISIBLE.

In the very point in difference at this moment, which ſtands as a ſtumbling block in the way of peace, the force of this important truth may ſpeedily be made manifeſt. With all the influence of the Britiſh miniſter, he cannot probably continue the war for any long ſeaſon on the ſcore of Belgium; and for this plain reaſon: the intereſt which the public ought to take in its ſeparation from France, bears no rational proportion to the price at which it muſt be purchaſed through war, ſuppoſing the event to be even certain. The people therefore will ſpeedily murmur; and as Mr. Pitt muſt either abandon Belgium or his ſituation,

Digitized by Google

tion, it is eaſy to anticipate the election he will make. France, on the other hand, will find fewer difficulties with her ſubjects. The wiſdom of miniſters has provided againſt it. Belgium, through the neceſſities of war, has been pledged to the public creditor, and the ſurrender of it upon any principle ſhort of a neceſſity which ſuperſedes all choice, would be a ſurrender of the very exiſtence of her republic.

I am not defending France; I am ſtating her actual ſituation, her views, and her capacities, and am endeavouring to trace them to their original and obvious cauſes.

But it was a conteſt, it ſeems, to ſave religion and its holy altars from profanation and annihilation. Of all the pretences by which the abuſed zeal of the people of England has been hurried on to a blind ſupport of miniſters, this alarm for the Chriſtian religion is the moſt impudent and prepoſterous. How it could ſucceed, for a moment, in an enlightened age, and with a nation of Chriſtians, will probably be conſidered hereafter as one of the moſt remarkable events which has diſtinguiſhed this age of wonders.

Before this diſcovery of the preſent miniſters, who had ever heard of the Chriſtianity of the French court, and its ſurrounding nobles, towards whom the hurricane of revolution was principally directed? Who had ever heard of their evangelical characters ſo as to lead to an apprehenſion that Chriſtianity muſt be

Digitized by Google

be extinguiſhed with their extinction? Who that ever really profeſſed the Chriſtian religion, from the times of the apoſtles to the preſent moment, ever before conſidered it as a human eſtabliſhment, the work of particular men or nations, ſubject to decline with their changes, or to periſh with their falls? No man ever exiſted who is more alive to every thing connected with the Chriſtian faith than the author of theſe pages, or more unalterably impreſſed with its truths; but theſe very impreſſions deprive me of any ſhare in that anxious concern of the cabinet at St. James's for the preſervation of religion, which was going to ruin, it ſeems, with the fall of the groſs ſuperſtitions and abominable corruptions of the prieſthood and monarchy of France. Weak men, not to have remembered, before they diſturbed the repoſe of the world by their pious apprehenſions, that the fabric of Chriſtianity was raiſed in direct oppoſition to all the powers and eſtabliſhments of the world, and that we have the authority of God himſelf, that all the nations of the earth ſhall be finally gathered together under its ſhadow. Raſh men, not to have reflected before they embarked in this cruſade of deſolation, that however good may be attained through evil, in the myſterious ſyſtem of Divine Providence, it is not for man to ſupport that religion, which commands peace and good will upon earth, by a deliberate and deep laid ſyſtem of bloodſhed, famine, and devaſtation. I by no means intend to inculcate by theſe obſervations, that, becauſe Chriſtianity, if it be founded in truth, muſt ultimately prevail

Digitized by Google

vail over all oppoſition, that therefore Chriſtian nations, or Chriſtian individuals, are abſolved from their activities in its defence, or in its propagation. In this, as in all other human diſpenſations, the Supreme Being acts by means that are human, and our duties are only exalted inſtead of being weakened by this awful conſideration: but theſe duties, whilſt they ſerve to quicken our zeal in what is good, can in no inſtance involve us in what is evil. They dignify that piety which propagates the goſpel by Chriſtian charities, but condemn that raſhneſs which would eſtabliſh or extend it by force.

This condemnation, from the very eſſence of Chriſtianity, muſt fall even upon honeſt error aſſerting its dominion by the ſword: but if the condemnation ſhould ever happen to range more widely, ſo as to involve ambition, dealing coldly in blood, for its own ſcandalous purpoſes, under the garb of meekneſs and truth, I dare not admit into my mind even an idea of the puniſhment which ought to follow. I would rather from humanity invoke the patience of God and man, than invite or direct their vengeance.

The pretence of a war waged againſt opinions to check, as it was alledged, the contagion of their propagation, is equally ſenſeleſs and extravagant. The ſame reaſon might equally have united all nations, in all times, againſt the progreſſive changes which have conducted nations from barbariſm to light, and from deſpotiſm to freedom. It ought indiſſolubly to have

Digitized by Google

combined the catholic kingdoms to wage eternal war, till the principles of the reformation, leading to a new civil eſtabliſhment, had been abandoned. It ſhould have kept the ſword unſheathed until the United Provinces returned to the ſubjection of Spain, until King William's title and the eſtabliſhment of the Britiſh revolution had given way to the perſons and prerogatives of the Stuarts, and until Waſhington, inſtead of yielding up the cares of a republican empire to a virtuous and free people, in the face of an admiring and aſtoniſhed world, ſhould have been dragged as a traitor to the bar of the Old Bailey, and his body quartered upon Tower Hill.

All theſe changes were alike in their turns calumniated and reprobated, and fought with by the abuſes which they diſgraced and trampled on. Time has now placed in the ſhade the arguments and the deeds by which wiſdom and valour triumphed: they are there only viewed by learning and retirement, which enables cowardice and folly, by artifices formerly defeated, the eaſier to impoſe upon a buſy or an unthinking world.

But it is maintained, that independent of the general intereſt of all nations to ſuppreſs irreligion and anarchy, the exiſtence of the French revolution had a direct and immediate bearing on the ſecurity of the *Britiſh government*; that the political principles which of old divided the country, and formed a ſalutary oppoſition to the crown, had taken an entirely new and dangerous

Digitized by Google

dangerous direction; that the firſt principles of our mixed and balanced government were held up to deriſion and reproach; that the privileged orders of the ſtate were mocked and inſulted; whilſt the reign of liberty, under a republican form, was anticipated with enthuſiaſm by large claſſes of the people.

Without at all admitting this to have been the caſe in the extent contended for, and relying, as I have already done, upon the judgments of our ſolemn tribunals for the refutation of it; yet, for the ſake of the argument, aſſuming it to be true, I am again utterly at a loſs to diſcover what is gained from the admiſſion by the advocates for the war. Such a diſpoſition in any conſiderable claſſes of the people might have called for particular prudence in government, and might have juſtified particular exertions of police. It might, in the honeſt opinion of many, have been a ſtrong argument againſt yielding to any reforms at that particular moment; it might have ſuggeſted ſome reſerves in the communications with France, even in times of peace, during the criſis of her political exploſion; and it might have juſtified vigorous proſecutions, carried on in the ſpirit and according to the practice of the laws. But I demand of the returning reaſon of the country, how the apprehended danger from the contagion of opinions could poſſibly be averted by WAR, or by the concomitant meaſures which were an inſeparable part of the ſyſtem? Were the forms of our free government likely to be better reconciled to the minds of alienated ſub-

Digitized by Google

jects by depriving them of the actual ſubſtance of freedom, which it is the object of all governments to ſecure? If they were diſcontented with the Engliſh conſtitution, was it likely that an attack upon the rights of juries, the alteration of the ſacred laws of King Edward the Third, and the ſuſpenſion of the act of Habeas Corpus, would bring them back to their former zeal and admiration of it? If a contempt for their repreſentatives was the crime imputed to them, and a diſpoſition to invade their authority was the danger to be averted, was it the wiſeſt courſe to erect the Houſe of Commons into a grand jury to find capital bills of indictment for the crown againſt the people, and to prejudge their cauſes by publiſhing the accuſing evidence under the cruſhing weight of their authority? If the ariſtocratic part of the ſtate was unhappily loſing its due eſtimation in popular opinion, was it prudent, at that particular moment, to deſtroy all that was venerable in the peerage, from ancient dignities and names of renown in the beſt times of England, by filling the Houſe of Lord with the proprietors of contemptible boroughs without even a pretence of public ſervice; and advancing to high titles, over the heads of the moſt ancient peers in the kingdom, men familiar to our recollection in very ſubordinate ſituations, marked during their whole lives by their ſervile dependence upon all miniſters, and odious to the people from their notorious attachment to arbitary principles of government? If it be poſſible to add to this climax of folly, was it reaſonable to expect, that by ruſhing blindly

Digitized by Google

blindly into war, and thereby impoſing the inevitable neceſſity of new taxes to an incalculable amount, we ſhould purge away the ſpleen which the very weight of taxes had notoriouſly engendered? Laſtly, was it the right courſe to eſcape from the conſequences of French opinions, when we knew to a certainty that it was not from the opinions with which we were to fight, but from that very ſyſtem of war and taxation that we were purſuing, as a remedy for diſaffection, that the French monarchy ſtruck upon the rock of revolution?

I deſire only to be reſpected or deſpiſed, to be conſidered as a man of common ſenſe or a madman, as *the fair public* voice of England is *even now* prepared to anſwer theſe queſtions.

The cauſe of this bold appeal to an enlightened country is obvious. If the queſtion be aſked, in what the excellence of every human government muſt conſiſt; the anſwer from civilized man throughout the world muſt be invariable and univerſal. It is that which ſecures the ends of civil ſociety with the feweſt reſtraints and at the leaſt expence. This is undoubtedly true government. This is that ſyſtem of rule and order in ſociety, exiſting by expreſs or tacit conſent, however it may have at firſt begun, or by whatever progreſs it may have become eſtabliſhed, which ſecures the greateſt number of benefits and enjoyments, and which ſecures them permanently; which impoſes the feweſt poſſible reſtraints beyond thoſe

Digitized by Google

thoſe which a ſound, moral, and a wiſe police ought to ſuggeſt in every country, and which leaves the ſubject in full poſſeſſion of all that induſtry or harmleſs chance can bring along with them, ſubject only to the ordinary internal expences of a frugal government, and the extraordinary contributions, to ſecure its preſervation and independence. This was once the emphatical deſcription of the Engliſh government, but it is inſenſibly ceaſing to be ſo: not that the conſtitution is loſt; but that its ineſtimable object is in the courſe of being ſacrificed to a falſe and pretended zeal for its preſervation. Taxation, as I have juſt obſerved, is the univerſal price which muſt univerſally be paid as a ſecurity for a national eſtabliſhment; but there are limits to every thing; if by raſh and unneceſſary wars, and by a venal ſyſtem of expenditure, even in times of peace the revenue gets to the point which, *without inſtant repentance and reformation*, is faſt approaching; the nation (by which I mean the great maſs and body of the people) can have no longer any poſſible intereſt in the defence or preſervation of their government: for if this ſyſtem of finance is perſiſted in, what has government in the end to ſecure? Not the property of the people derived from their induſtry, but the property of the public creditor, to whom that induſtry is pledged; and thus all the majeſty and dignity of the ſtate may degenerate into a mere machinery, neceſſary to protect the legalized incumbrance by further burdens on the ſubject, whoſe labour and exiſtence are mortgaged. In ſuch a ſituation, a government may too

late

Digitized by Google

late diſcover its error and inſecurity; becauſe the very zeal of the higher orders which encourages it in its extravagance, is, upon the firſt principle of human nature, an inducement to the lower orders to revolt. Adverting to this awful conſideration, I have been ſhocked in the extreme at the late oſtentatious triumph of the loan by ſubſcription. Very many perſons, I am perſuaded, have ſubſcribed to it from real motives of public ſpirit, and their exertion was a moſt ſeaſonable and critical relief to the ſtate; but paſſing by the condition to which miniſters have reduced their country, when public ſpirit may be really manifeſted towards a government by a loan which would conduct a private lender to a priſon as an uſurer, what muſt be the reflections of the middle claſſes and the labouring poor of England upon the facility taxation, which this ſort of patriotiſm produces? The rich lend their money at ten per cent. but the public induſtry is mortgaged for the payment of the intereſt, and every article of conſumption is already almoſt beyond the reach of the artificer and huſbandman, ſcrewed up as they are in proportion as they happen to come within the vortex of this accumulating revenue.

To what length this ſyſtem may extend without a great public calamity, I purpoſely avoid diſcuſſing; but the ſupport given by the deluſion of the higher claſſes of the public to a ſyſtem of meaſures at once ſo weak and ſo deſtructive, ſo unjuſt to the people, and ſo deſtructive to themſelves, poſterity,

Digitized by Google

poſterity, if not the preſent generation, may have occaſion to lament in unavailing ſackcloth. The danger to the monied intereſt and the proprietors of the funds, by the preſent unexampled expenditure, is certainly the moſt prominent and imminent. A danger which they have themſelves provoked, and which is becoming critical by their own infatuation. But the proprietors of lands would do well to recollect alſo that their ſituation is ſcarcely preferable. The war could neither have been begun nor continued to this hour, if the great repreſentatives of the landed intereſt had not ſupported the miniſters who projected it; and I cannot believe that the people of Great Britain, whoſe fortunes depend upon public credit, or the Parliament repreſenting that people, will ever conſent either to a bankruptcy or to any inſolvent compoſition with the government, without a proceſs, which in the horrors of revolution would be a diſgraceful confiſcation; but which in the legal reformations, impoſed by neceſſity and juſtice upon the councils of a moral and intelligent people, would teach every diſtinct claſs and order of mankind, that their intereſts are inſeparably interwoven with the intereſt of the whole community; and that they muſt always bear their contingent in the final ſettlement of a national account.

Amongſt the public ſupporters in Parliament of theſe meaſures I am complaining of, and amongſt the higher claſſes of men, who with equal zeal have privately ſupported them, I know there are many,

Digitized by Google

very many perſons of the firſt honour, of the cleareſt integrity, and the beſt general ſenſe, however miſguided upon this particular ſubject. Indeed, it is a matter of great comfort to me to believe, as I do moſt firmly, that notwithſtanding the wide range of luxury and corruption, the nation is enlightened and virtuous. I deſire, indeed, to faſten perſonal ignominy or reproach upon no individual, public or private. I leave every man's motives to his own conſcience, and to Him who alone can ſearch them. But theſe conceſſions, which private honour and public decency alike exact from me, leave me nevertheleſs in full poſſeſſion of the privilege of a Britiſh ſubject, which I ſhall fearleſsly proceed to exerciſe, by charging the full, excluſive, and conſtitutional reſponſibility of all conſequences upon thoſe miniſters who have officially adviſed and conducted the meaſures which produced them.

To eſtimate rightly the extent of this reſponſibility, let us look at the comparative condition of Great Britain, if even fortitude and patience can bear to look at it, had the preſent war been avoided by prudent councils; and if the one hundred millions of money abſolutely thrown away upon it, or even half of that ſum had been raiſed by a vigorous and popular adminiſtration for the reduction of the national debt. Fancy can hardly forbear to indulge in ſuch a renovating ſcene of proſperity; a ſcene which unhappily it is now her excluſive and melancholy privilege to reſort to.

Digitized by Google

We ſhould have ſeen a moral, ingenious, and induſtrious people, conſenting to an encreaſe of burdens to repair the errors of their fathers, and to ward off their conſequences from cruſhing their poſterity; but enjoying under the preſſure of them the virtuous conſolation, that they were laying the foundation of a long career of national happineſs; ſeeing every relaxed and wearied ſinew of the government coming back to its vigour, not by ſudden reſt, which is an enemy to convaleſcence, but by the gradual diminution of the weight which overpreſſed them. Obſerving new ſources of trade and manufacture burſting forth like the buds of the ſpring, as the froſts of winter are gradually chaſed away, and ſeeing with pride and ſatisfaction, in the hands of a wiſe and frugal government, a large and growing capital for the refreſhment of all its dependencies. To encourage and to extend marine eſtabliſhments, our only real ſecurity againſt the hour when ambition might diſturb the repoſe of nations. To give vigour to arts and manufactures, by large rewards and bounties. To feed and to employ the poor, by grand and extenſive plans of national improvement. To remove by degrees the preſſure of complicated revenue, and with it the complicated and galling penalties inſeparable from its collection. To form a fund, to bring juſtice within the reach and to the very doors of the poor, and, by a large public revenue at the command of the magiſtracy, to ward off the miſeries, the reflection of which, under the beſt ſyſtem of laws in the world, and under their pureſt adminiſtration, have wrung with frequent

ſorrow

Digitized by Google

ſorrow the heart of the writer of theſe pages. And, finally, to enable this great, benevolent, and enlightened country, with a more liberal and exhauſtleſs hand, to advance in her glorious career of humaniſing the world, and ſpreading the lights of the goſpel to the uttermoſt corners of the earth. All theſe animating viſions are, I am afraid, fled for ever. It will be happy now if Great Britain, amidſt the ſufferings and diſtreſſes of her inhabitants, can maintain her preſent trade, and preſerve, even with all its defects, her preſent ineſtimable conſtitution.

Having ſhewn the origin of the war, and the exertions made by the ſmall minority in Parliament, I now proceed to expoſe to the nation the blindneſs and obſtinacy with which it was purſued; in ſpite of a ſeries of the moſt favourable opportunities to terminate it with advantage in the beginning, and in defiance afterwards of a chain of events in rapid and diſaſtrous ſucceſſion, which manifeſted the utter impracticability of the objects for which it was perſevered in. I will do this from a ſhort review of the principal proceedings of Parliament upon the ſubject, which ſpeak for themſelves; their exiſtence cannot be denied, nor their contents miſrepreſented with effect. I ſelect thoſe of the Houſe of Commons, not only becauſe I was perſonally preſent at moſt of them, but becauſe they are notoriouſly the foundation of all the tranſactions of government.

Digitized by Google

Hoſtilities had ſcarcely been commenced, when the ſubject was again brought before the Houſe of Commons by Mr. Grey; a gentleman who has juſtly endeared himſelf to his country by his able and indefatigable exertions throughout every ſtage of this extraordinary conjuncture, and who has ſecured to himſelf the well-earned fame of a moſt accompliſhed orator, and, what is better, of an honeſt ſtateſman, in times of unexampled profligacy and corruption.

On the 21ſt of February, 1793, Mr. Grey propoſed an addreſs to the King, expoſing the miſconduct of his miniſters in plunging the nation into war without any adequate neceſſity, and lamenting the pretexts by which its popularity was promoted, in ſurpriſing the humanity of Engliſhmen into meaſures which their deliberate judgements would condemn, and by influencing their moſt virtuous ſenſibilities into a blind and furious zeal for a war of vengeance. The concluſion "*implored his Majeſty to ſeize the* "*moſt immediate opportunity of putting a ſtop to the* "*hoſtilities which threatened all Europe with the* "*greateſt calamities.*"

No other anſwer was given to this ſeaſonable propoſition, than that the Houſe had already and recently decided upon the queſtion; and not only no ſtep was taken to open the way to negotiation, but, on the contrary, *after many other fruitleſs attempts towards the ſame object*, his Majeſty's miniſters, at the opening

Digitized by Google

opening of the following ſeſſion, on the 21ſt of January, 1794, with greater ſincerity than has in general characterized their proceedings, boldly and plainly avowed the principle on which the war had been begun, and was to be proſecuted, viz. "*To oppoſe that wild and deſtructive ſyſtem of rapine, anarchy, impiety, and irreligion; the effects of which, as they had been manifeſted in France, furniſhed a dreadful but uſeful leſſon to the preſent age and poſterity.*" This was the avowed principle of continuing the war, as appears by a reference to his Majeſty's ſpeech *.—Not a word was ſaid upon the footing of territory and conqueſt, although all the Auſtrian Netherlands had then been reduced under the government of the Emperor, although Mentz had been re-captured, and ſoon after Valenciennes, Condé, and Queſnoy, taken; and although Holland had been delivered from an impending invaſion.

Under theſe circumſtances, ſo favourable for negotiation, ſo critical for terminating the war on terms advantageous to England and her allies, *(if it had proceeded upon any rational intelligible foundation)* not only no motion was made towards an amicable arrangement, but a principle of hoſtilities was thus openly developed, which wholly and abſolutely precluded the return of peace.

This declaration of miniſters, as contained in the King's Speech, was the more ſtriking and extraor-

* Vide the King's Speech, 21ſt Jan. 1794.

dinary,

Digitized by Google

dinary, as it directly refuted their own unfounded assertion, that the war had proceeded from France. Mr. Pitt had continued to assert in Parliament, long after the dismission of Chauvelin, *that the King had still left the door open to negociation and amicable adjustment*: yet no sooner was the war begun than its coutinuance was avowed and supported upon a principle, which shewed that peace could, under no concessions of France, have been preserved. For as the war was to be waged to subdue principles and opinions; to change the government and not to punish overt acts of insult; or to enforce restitution; it is plain, *that the door had never been left open at all*, as the minister had pretended; since France was precisely in the same state at this moment as when M. Chauvelin was ordered to quit the kingdom: and if the return of peace was at the opening of the session declared to be inadmissible, whilst the principles of her government continued, it follows, that the original preservation of peace must have been equally inadmissible, whatever concessions might have been made by France to preserve it; since the self-same system existed at the commencement of the war, which was now pronounced to be an insuperable obstacle to negociation. I hope the time is now arrived, or at least is rapidly arriving, when the calm common sense of the country will detect such palpable duplicity.

This new and fatal principle of hostility was rendered still more clear from the posture of the debate upon the address; which was led, on the part of the govern-

Digitized by Google

government, by the Earl of Mornington, in a very able and complicated ſpeech, the reſult of much thought and labour, and delivered with great force. It was afterwards publiſhed as a ſort of creed of miniſters upon the ſubject of the war. Towards the concluſion of this ſpeech, as far as I could hear diſtinctly from the enthuſiaſtic approbation which the ſentiment produced, it contained theſe expreſſions: "*That whilſt the preſent, or any Jacobin government* "*continued in France, no propoſition for peace could be* "*received or propoſed by England.*" I forbear to remark upon the fallacy of the means by which this ſtout propoſition was juſtified; time has unfortunately been beforehand with me upon the ſubject; events have already trampled upon the principles, and refuted the calculations.

Upon this occaſion the Miniſter, the Houſe, and the Nation, received anothar ſolemn warning from Mr. Fox, againſt the phrenzy of thus purſuing a conteſt big with the moſt ruinous conſequences, *without any defined or definable object.* This extraordinary man, ſummoning up all the mighty powers of his capacious mind, in a ſpeech of unparalleled depth, comprehenſion, and eloquence, detailed the inevitable conſequences of ſuch a proceeding: he predicted the future conſolidation of France from our very efforts to deſtroy her: he anticipated the diſſolution of a confederacy cemented by no intelligible principle of common intereſt: he looked forward to the defection of ſome, to the ſubjugation of others, and with

Digitized by Google

with a too prophetic pencil (would to God he had been permitted to expunge the ſcene again by his own councils!) painted the melancholy and diſaſtrous ſtate to which his country would in the end be reduced, and which I aſſert to be nearly her condition at this moment. Left almoſt ſingle as we are upon the theatre of war—aſking for peace, but aſking for it in vain, upon terms which without war were not only within our reach to obtain, but left to us to dictate—aſking for peace in France under the preſſure of a neceſſity created by our own folly—aſking it of the regicide Directory, whoſe exiſtence (I appeal to Mr. Burke and Lord Fitzwilliam) was pronounced to be perpetual war. Silent upon the ſubject of religion, without any atonement to its violated altars—and ſeeking by a thouſand ſubterfuges and artifices unworthy of a great nation (and which muſt and will certainly be unſucceſsful) to reſtore peace without humbling the pride of the miniſters who provoked the war, by conſenting to terms which nothing but their own imbecility could have raiſed France to the condition of offering, or have reduced England to the mortification of accepting.*

In order to relieve the country from the horrible condition of thus waging a war without a defined object, and conſequently without a proſpect of termination, Mr. Grey, on the 26th of January, 1795,

* A motion for peace was alſo made in the Houſe of Lords, on the 17th of February, by the Marquis of Landſdown, ſupported by a moſt enlightened and convincing ſpeech upon the rottenneſs of that confederacy which has ſince fallen to pieces.

made

Digitized by Google

made a motion "*to declare it to be the opinion of the "House of Commons, that the existence of the present "government of France ought not to be considered as "precluding at that time a negotiation for peace.*"

At this time his Majesty's ministers had begun to open their eyes to the improbability of restoring the French Monarchy, or, indeed, any monarchical establishment in France, and had begun to see also the danger of being pledged to war during the existence of her republican constitution. For although Mr. Grey's proposition had been *distinctly stated, and as clearly and distinctly accepted for debate by the minister*, as if it had been an issue framed by lawyers for judicial decision, yet on the day of the motion he fled from the discussion thus tendered and received, and interposed the following dexterous, but disastrous, amendment—"*Declaring the determination of the "House to support the King in the prosecution of the just "and necessary war, and praying his Majesty to employ "the resources of the country to prosecute it with vigour "and effect* UNTIL A PACIFICATION COULD BE "EFFECTED ON JUST AND HONOURABLE TERMS "WITH ANY GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE CAPABLE "OF MAINTAINING THE ACCUSTOMED RELA-"TIONS OF PEACE AND AMITY WITH OTHER "COUNTRIES."

The object of this amendment which the *late* House of Commons adopted is almost too plain for commentary. The minister, unable to justify an absolute refusal of negotiation *upon any terms* with the

Digitized by Google

exiſting French government, but being reſolved not to negotiate FOR THE PRESENT, nor to pledge himſelf to any FUTURE period when he would negotiate, nor to any diſtinct principles or circumſtances by which he might ſtand in any degree pledged at any time upon the ſubject, had recourſe to the abſolutely *general* terms of his own amendment to evade Mr. Grey's propoſition. What ſort of government it was, or might be, which ſhould create or ſecure this capacity of maintaining *the relations of amity* he reſerved for his own ſingle determination, to be afterwards exerciſed juſt as it might ſuit his convenience from the contingencies of adverſity or ſucceſs. If ſucceſs attended the war, he might continue to deny the capacity of preſerving amity, and purſue the ſyſtem of ſubjugation or utter extermination; whilſt on the other hand, if the adverſity foretold to him overtook him, he might recede from his haughty pretenſions without inconſiſtency or humiliation, and, without any change of the principles to be ſubdued by war, declare the return of a ſocial and civil capacity of his own mere creation.

If this tranſaction, pregnant with ſo many dangers, were not thus authenticated by the very Journals of Parliament, the hiſtorian who ſhould venture to tranſmit it to future times would ſcarcely find credit for his narration.

We ſee a mighty and warlike nation, with a population of twenty-five millions of ſouls, ſituated too at our very doors, and with which therefore ſooner or later

Digitized by Google

later we muſt either cultivate a friendly intercourſe, or live in a perpetual ſtate of warfare; we ſee ſuch a community put with a ſingle ſtroke of the pen out of the pale and communion of civilized nations. We ſee her (whilſt, ſtrange to tell! peace was avowed to be our object) branded in the face of all Europe as a ſtanding plague, abomination, and reproach, not upon any recent act of aggreſſion or inſult, nor upon any actual or alledged reſiſtance to propoſitions of peace and amity from ourſelves or from other nations, but only upon this arrogant and inſulting pretext of a politic incapacity wholly and purpoſely undefined.

By this unparalleled procedure, the French nation, inſtead of being drawn inſenſibly back to the humane and ſocial order from which the paroxyſms of her revolution had diverted her—inſtead of being at once awed by and reconciled to Great Britain, from ſeeing her purſuing a ſyſtem active only as it regarded her own ſecurity, but in all other reſpects neutral, and even complacent, ſhe has been brought to a temper of rooted jealouſy and diſguſt: and, as an animal purſued beyond the ordinary courſe for which its common powers and inſtincts are beſtowed, riſes to a pitch of ſagacity, ſtrength, and boldneſs, which the natural hiſtorian can take no account of,—ſo France, thus baited and inſulted, thus ſurrounded by nations with the arm of death lifted againſt her, has equally put at fault the ordinary calculations of national exertions, and brought this raſh and dangerous mi-

Digitized by Google

niſter to a ſtate of repentance unfortunately too late for his country.

The charge which this tranſaction eſtabliſhes againſt him is of the moſt ſerious and heavy complexion. We are now deſired by this very miniſter to raiſe the cry againſt the ambition of France; againſt her inſolent demeanour on the ſubject of peace, and her contempt of the balances which treaties have eſtabliſhed in Europe. If to obey this call would ſerve the intereſts of my country, I ſhould think it a pious fraud to burn theſe pages, and to join in the abuſe. But as railing at our enemies will neither conciliate nor ſubdue them, it is fit to recollect that the inſolence of *her* deportment has been dictated, if not juſtified, by *our own*. It is the Britiſh miniſter who has enabled France to hold a language which it may not, perhaps, be in our power to ſilence; and which, under ſimilar circumſtances, would be the univerſal language of man from the Pole to the Equator, if French principles, French opinions, and French revolution, had never exiſted in the world.

Every people, ſo abſurdly and impoliticly outraged, would hold this language to us:—YOU, who now from no juſtice or good-will towards us, but under the preſſure of a neceſſity created by yourſelves, preſent yourſelves at Paris with the balance of Europe in your hands, which you call upon us to reſpect; YOU were the firſt to break it to pieces for OUR deſtruction. You expunged us even from amongſt the nations

Digitized by Google

nations whoſe aggregate compoſe that Europe you would thus adjuſt and balance; and you invited all the nations, which ſhould be poiſed in its ſcales for common ſecurity, to put themſelves together into one ſcale to cruſh and overwhelm us. In the reſiſtance of this unprincipled conſpiracy, and for our own ſecurity againſt its effects, we have ſeized upon the territories of the principal conſpirator, and we will preſerve them as a barrier againſt the dangers we have ſurmounted, which, under other circumſtances, might have been fatal. You now talk to us of your treaty with this Emperor, and we have no right to queſtion the merit of that fidelity which binds you to each other. If you agreed not to lay down the ſword but by common conſent, it is not for France to argue Great Britain into a breach of her obligations. But what have we to do with the terms of a treaty between the Emperor and England which had our utter deſtruction as a nation for its foundation; and if, as you aſſert, (perhaps with reaſon) that it is inadmiſſible for France to ſet up the annexation of Belgium, and the demands *of her conſtitution* as a bar to the propoſed retroceſſion, it is no leſs inadmiſſible for Great Britain to ſet up HER *own treaties* with belligerent nations made without the conſent of France, and made only for her deſtruction, as *her* ultimatum for the reſtoration of the peace which *ſhe* propoſes.

Would to God this were the language of ſpeculation only—if it were ſo, it ſhould not be publicly mine—but it is the actual language of the councils of France,

as

Digitized by Google

as will appear more distinctly in the sequel—as against ministers it is an argument of weight; but I hope to shew hereafter, that under other councils it never could have been held, and would not even now be held in the same extent or in the same temper against the British nation in its old, simple, manly, and august character of freedom.

Ministers cannot hereafter be sheltered from the responsibility of these proceedings upon the plea of inadvertency or mistake. Their danger and impolicy, and their certain effect to produce the very conjuncture we are at this moment placed in, was insisted on before the late Parliament in both Houses in a series of motions, one after another, during two whole sessions, conducted with such great abilities, and supported by such obvious policy, that though they had no effect within doors, they wrought an insensible effect upon the public, which, mixed with the distresses of the war, and the impracticability of its object, convinced the minister that his pretensions must at last be abandoned, and led him, amidst the struggles of obstinacy and necessity, to pursue that system of management, duplicity, and evasion, which has placed us, at length, in our present situation.

On the 6th of February, 1795, Mr. Grey moved a resolution, that without presuming to dictate or to suggest the time, or the mode, or the lines of negotiation, only sought to remove the formal obstacle by

Digitized by Google

by the acknowledgment of a power in France competent to negotiate; "and appealing for that competency not only to the univerſal principles on which "all nations had ever acted towards each other, but "to the practice and experience of the United States "of America, and of ſeveral powers of Europe in "amity with the French republic."

This reſolution was conſidered by the miniſter to be in ſubſtance the ſame which had been made in the January preceding, and was diſpoſed of accordingly by the previous queſtion. But Mr. Wilberforce, member for Yorkſhire, ſtruck I muſt ſuppoſe by the unanſwerable principle and moderation of the propoſition, divided with the minority; declaring that the language in the addreſs to his Majeſty's ſpeech, and on various other occaſions having held out to the French, that we would not treat with their preſent rulers, it was fit that that inſurmountable obſtacle to peace ſhould immediately be removed. And that as the latter part of the reſolution had no other object, he ſhould give it his ſupport.

I mention this circumſtance, becauſe it proves to a demonſtration, *that independently of all terms of negotiation, the incapacity of France to negotiate continued to be the ruling principle of the war.*

That the ſeſſion might not paſs away, leaving the affairs of the public in a condition ſo unexampled, more eſpecially, as it was plain from a thouſand circumſtances,

Digitized by Google

cumſtances, that before Parliament could re-aſſemble, the condition of Great Britain would be leſs commanding, Mr. Fox, on the 24th of March, moved that the Houſe might reſolve itſelf into a committee of the whole Houſe, to conſider of the ſtate of the nation. I had the good fortune to hear the noble oration by which this motion was ſupported. Its principal heads and arguments the public is happily poſſeſſed of; but not of all the ſubordinate parts which connected them together, much leſs of that awful and commanding eloquence which brought home every part of it to the underſtanding and the heart. It did not, however, add a ſingle name to the diviſion; and although the internal commotions of France were then faſt ſubſiding, though her preſent conſtitution was in a ſtate of organization, though the King of Pruſſia's conduct was more than ambiguous, though the French had penetrated into the heart of Catalonia, and a peace of neceſſity with Spain was inevitably approaching, and though we were proceeding by remonſtrance againſt the Swiſs cantons, Tuſcany, and Genoa, on the ſubject of their neutrality; yet the Parliament was prorogued without any inquiry into the paſt, or plan or object for the future; an inſuperable obſtacle of peace was wantonly preſerved, and France was left under the ban of excommunication to exhauſt our reſources, to ſeparate us from our allies, to extend her conqueſts, and upon the unalterable and univerſal principles of human conduct, to nouriſh that ſpirit of diſtruſt and animoſity, at which we now affect to be ſurpriſed.

When

Digitized by Google

When the Parliament met, on the 29th of October, 1795, ſome of the changes in the affairs of Europe, which all the world, except miniſters, had ſeen the certain approach of, had arrived, and the reſt were following. The deteſtable expedition at Quiberon had failed, and covered its authors with everlaſting ſhame; all proſpect of keeping up rebellion in La Vendée had vaniſhed, and France was far advanced in the organization of her preſent conſtitution; many of our poſſeſſions in the Weſt Indies had been overrun and pillaged, the King of Pruſſia had totally departed from his alliance, and Spain had been forcibly detached from it; the dominion of the Stadtholder had paſſed away, and his Majeſty declared to us to be in a ſtate of war with ſubjugated Holland. Miniſters, however, ſaw nothing in all this, diſaſtrous or alarming—on the contrary, his Majeſty's ſpeech began with the following encouraging declaration:

"*It is a great ſatisfaction to me to reflect, that "notwithſtanding the many events unfavourable to "the common cauſe, the proſpect reſulting from the "general ſituation of affairs has, in many reſpects, "been materially improved in the courſe of the preſent "war.*"

Amongſt the enumerated improvements, the alteration in the affairs of France was not omitted, and would probably have appeared the moſt ſtriking and remarkable if it had not been wholly eclipſed by the concluſion which was drawn from it.

Digitized by Google

France had now organized her new conſtitution, and as the country was looking with encreaſed anxiety to the moment when ſhe might be declared capable of negotiation, it might have been expected that miniſters would have adviſed his Majeſty to connect the communication of this important event with the proſpect of immediate peace.

If, by the practice of the conſtitution, the ſpeech of the Sovereign proceeded perſonally from himſelf, it is impoſſible they could have been ſeparated; but the ſpeech of the King is the ſpeech of his miniſter, and is always ſo conſidered by the Parliament and the nation, and in good truth the preſent one bears the moſt indelible and genuine marks of its author.

As the anarchy of France was in a manner admitted to be at an end, what was to come next? A government undoubtedly capable of maintaining the relations of amity—NO—this concluſion would have been too rapid a motion towards a negotiation.—We were therefore told, "*that the diſtraction and anarchy* "*which had prevailed in France had led to a criſis,* "*of which it was as yet impoſſible to foreſee the iſſue;* "*but which, in all human probability, muſt produce* "*conſequences highly important to the intereſts of Eu-* "*rope.*

This bold and penetrating declaration led the way, as might be expected, to the old neceſſity of proſecuting the war with vigour and alacrity; and accordingly, with

Digitized by Google

with the communication of new treaties, this was the concluſion of his Majeſty's ſpeech, which, in the form of a ſuitable addreſs, received again the ſanction of the late Houſe of Commons.

On this occaſion Mr. Fox once more implored the miniſters, and the Houſe, and the nation, to advert to our condition, and the utter impracticability of ſucceeding in the object of the war, and propoſed an humble addreſs, "earneſtly beſeeching his Majeſty "not to conſider the governing powers of France to "be incapable of maintaining the accuſtomed rela- "tions of peace and amity, and appealing to the "recent treaties ſhe had entered into, and the peace "that ſhe already maintained with Pruſſia, Spain, "and ſeveral of the princes of the empire."—This ſalutary propoſition was alſo negatived—the miniſter, at the ſame time, declaring, that when the conſtitution of France ſhould be put in activity with the acquieſcence of the nation, ſo as to enable its legiſlature to ſpeak as the repreſentatives of the French people, we ought *then* to be ready to negotiate, without any regard to the form or nature of the government.

Here then was another explicit admiſſion, that without any refuſal on the part of France to negotiate, or upon any ſpecific difference *(as at preſent)* concerning terms of peace, we were ſuffering her to conſolidate her empire, to nouriſh her animoſities, to diſſolve our alliances, and to threaten Europe with univerſal ſubjugation: the blood and

Digitized by Google

money of England pouring out, in the mean time, until our conſtitution-mongers and augurs of political capacities ſhould be ſatisfied that France was fit to be received into the holy communion of the robbers and deſtroyers of Poland.

" The longeſt day will have an end." In only a little more than a month after this period, France had completed her probation to the ſatisfaction of his Majeſty's miniſters, who accordingly adviſed the King to ſend a meſſage to the Commons on the 9th of December, acquainting the Houſe, " *That the* " *criſis which was depending at the beginning of the* " *ſeſſion, had led to ſuch a ſtate of things, as would* " *induce his Majeſty to* MEET *any diſpoſition to nego-* " *tiation on the part of the enemy, with an earneſt de-* " *ſire to give it the fulleſt and ſpeedieſt effect, and to* " *conclude a treaty of general peace whenever it could* " *be effected on juſt and ſuitable terms for his Majeſty* " *and his allies.*"

It is fit to pauſe here a little to examine this declaration; to conſider to what, in honeſt effect, though not in preciſe words, it pledged the miniſters who adviſed it, that we may be enabled to examine the correſpondence or repugnancy of their ſubſequent conduct to their ſolemn engagements in the mouth of their Sovereign.

The declaration admits the return of France to a capacity to maintain the common relations of peace and

Digitized by Google

and amity, becauſe, though it maſks this capacity under the vague deſignation *of a ſtate of things*, yet a readineſs to negotiate, in avowed conformity with the King's former declarations, amounts to a ſubſtantive admiſſion, that the *formerly declared obſtacle* to peace from the condition of France was done away. Moreover, by the expreſſion of an earneſt deſire, on the part of his Majeſty, to give the fulleſt effect to the ſpeedieſt negotiation of an honourable peace, it unqueſtionably bound the miniſters to take ſome immediate ſtep to manifeſt the ſincerity of that declaration. But mark the reſervation obviouſly introduced into the meſſage to nullify this whole proceeding.

Miniſters were pledged to no *active* ſtep whatſoever: on the contrary, the language of the meſſage compleatly ſecured to them the privilege of continuing perfectly paſſive upon the ſubject of peace. His Majeſty only expreſſed his readineſs to MEET any diſpoſition *on the part of his enemies* to negotiate. Now, conſidering again the royal declaration as not at all perſonal to the King, but wholly as the act of his miniſters, in what language ſhall I ſpeak of it? Where or how was his Majeſty, in the nature of things, to *meet* ſuch pacific diſpoſitions, however they might have been entertained on the part of France? The Britiſh government, by the various acts of its Crown and Parliament (enumerated in the preceding pages), had interpoſed a poſitive and public obſtacle to negotiation—it had declared the incapacity of the French

Digitized by Google

French government; an obſtacle the moſt inſulting and degrading ever offered by one independent nation to another; and, notwithſtanding this declaration of the new ſtate of things in the meſſage, it is plain that this obſtacle ſtill continued.

The declaration was a mere private communication of the King of Great Britai . *to his own Parliament*: it contained no ſignification *to France* of this change of ſentiment regarding her government. The exiſtence of a government was not even acknowledged.—If indeed his Majeſty had accompanied the communication to his own Parliament with an authoritative declaration to the new government of France, acknowledging its civil capacity as the repreſentative of the French nation, and expreſſing a readineſs to negotiate, even in the paſſive language of the meſſage, I ſhould then have conſidered ſuch a proceeding as a fair motion towards peace. But I again make my conſtant appeal to the enlightened good ſenſe of the country, whether, without making France at all a party to this proceeding, without any declaration *to her*, that we ſaw that capacity in her government admitted by the meſſage, but which we had ſo long denied, it was poſſible miniſters could believe for a moment that they were really advancing in the work of peace. I deſire to ſtand or fall in the whole of what I have written, as this plain queſtion ſhall be anſwered by every man whoſe reaſon is not diſordered, or whoſe heart is not corrupted.

When

Digitized by Google

When the meſſage came to be taken into conſideration in the Houſe of Commons on the 9th of December, the remarks I have made upon the wording of it were completely illuſtrated. The addreſs breathed nothing but vigorous preparations for continuing the war---not a hint was given of any communication to France of our ſentiments concerning her new government; nor was there any thing in the language of miniſters that could lead France even to believe, that we looked towards a negotiation in the genuine temper and ſpirit of peace.

In oppoſition to this addreſs, an amendment was moved by Mr. Sheridan, " lamenting that his Ma-
" jeſty had ever been led to conſider the internal
" order of things in France as an obſtacle to peace,
" becauſe, if the preſent order of things were ad-
" mitted as the inducement to negotiation, a change
" of that order of things might be conſidered as a
" ground for diſcontinuing negotiation begun, or
" even for abandoning a treaty concluded; and
" praying his Majeſty to give diſtinct directions, that
" immediate negotiation might be entered upon for
" the above ſalutary object." I forbear to notice the powerful manner by which this moſt ſeaſonable propoſition was ſupported, becauſe it might ſeem as if it were the only occaſion in which this extraordinary perſon had employed his great talents in Parliament upon the ſubject of the war. I have not before had occaſion to name Mr. Sheridan, becauſe my object naturally led me to the propoſitions made in Parliament

Digitized by Google

ment during the war, and not to the debates on them, which are in the hands of every body; but when I am brought to name him as the mover of this amendment, it is but a juſt tribute to ſo happy an union of public ſpirit and genius, to expreſs my admiration of the various powers of his mind, which nature has ſo ſeldom united. A ſuperior and ſublime eloquence, the force of ſound reaſoning, and the happieſt command of wit, which ſerves occaſionally to expoſe when no arguments would defeat, and which affords the happieſt illuſtration of Pope's deſcription of this rare and uſeful qualification.

For the ſame reaſons, let me not be thought to have overlooked the merits of the few excellent and accompliſhed perſons who compoſe the minority in both Houſes of Parliament, and who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their talents and ſteadineſs in the cauſe of their country---amidſt the moſt mortifying and diſpiriting circumſtances which ever attended any oppoſition in Britiſh Houſes of Parliament. This ſmall body of men have ſtood firmly and indefatigably at their poſts, animated by the ſenſations which a great moral writer aſcribes to greatneſs under temporary depreſſion and neglect; "Little diſappointed, not at "all dejected, relying upon their own merit with "ſteady conſciouſneſs; and waiting, without impa- "tience, the viciſſitudes of opinion and the impar- "tiality of a future generation."

From

Digitized by Google

From the 9th of December, 1795, when this meſſage from the King was agitated, and the propoſition for negotiation was negatived, until the 8th of March, 1796, when Mr. Wickham tranſmitted the note* to M. Barthelemi, no motion whatſoever, directly or indirectly, was made by miniſters towards peace—on the contrary, when they were again urged to it by a motion of Mr. Grey, in the Houſe of Commons, on the 6th of February, the anſwer was, that though the negotiation had been declared inadmiſſible, they were not to be bound hand and foot to negotiate; and we are now therefore brought, at laſt, to the period of Mr. Wickham's propoſition, the true criterion by which the wiſdom and ſincerity of miniſters, on the ſubject of peace, muſt be eſtimated; not only becauſe both the time and the mode were the reſult of their own long deliberations, but becauſe they have been pleaſed to aſſert, in his Majeſty's late royal declaration, "*that the ſtep in "queſtion was the beſt calculated for its object; that "the anſwer of the French government was haughty "and evaſive, and affected to queſtion the ſincerity "of thoſe diſpoſitions of which His Majeſty's conduct "afforded* SO UNEQUIVOCAL A PROOF." Laying in my conſtitutional claim, a third time, to conſider his Majeſty's declaration as the declaration of his miniſter merely, and for which he is perſonally reſponſible, I

* See the note alluded to in his Majeſty's late meſſage, and printed with the other parts of the negotiation, on Lord Malmeſbury's return from Paris, for the uſe of both Houſes of Parliament.

Digitized by Google

utterly deny that the beſt ſtep, or that any juſt or rational ſtep was taken by miniſters in Mr. Wickham's propoſitions towards peace. And I aſſert, that it was impoſſible that France ſhould not actually entertain that ſuſpicion of our ſincerity which the declaration charges to be affected.

In order to eſtabliſh the grounds of this aſſertion, I deſire only to recur to the obſervation which I have already made upon his Majeſty's meſſage in the December preceding.

Till that time, France had been declared incapable of maintaining the common civil intercourſe of nations. Her government had been publickly branded to all Europe as a den of tyrants and robbers, and her country had been invaded, not only by foreign war, but by her revolted ſubjects, under Engliſh banners, to deſolate France by inteſtine and civil fury.

I am not now re-arguing the impropriety of ſuch a proceeding, I am only ſtating the fact, in order to eſtimate its natural effects.

When Mr. Wickham made his propoſition in March, no notification (as I have obſerved already) had been given to France that any change of ſentiment had taken place in the Britiſh councils on the ſubject of her government, neither could ſhe read it in the conduct of the war. England was ſtill endeavouring to engage the activity of her allies in the original

Digitized by Google

original cauſe which had confederated Europe. She continued as before to ſubſidize the Emperor, and, what is more important, ſhe continued to pay the army of the Prince of Condé, made up of French noblemen, who could not be ſuppoſed to be fighting for the new French conſtitution, and whom, by the bye, they never took into pay until they had in effect given up the very cauſe for which theſe unfortunate men were contending.

Under theſe circumſtances, could France really believe that we were ſincerely converted to her republican government by the diviſion of the Council of Ancients from the Council of Five Hundred, and in the ſtriking ſimilitude between the five perſons of the Directory and the hereditary unity of the monarchical part of a ſtate? Had we acknowleged her government? or had we told her of this happy and wonderful converſion? or is there a man of honour in England, who will lay his hand upon his heart and ſay, that he believes this new French conſtitution, this legitimate infant of a month old, was the cauſe of the King's meſſage? Nay, further, who will not admit that the growing neceſſities of the country, and the feelings of the people on the ſubject of the war, did not ſolely and ſingly produce it? And that miniſters were feeling their way towards peace, whilſt they were taking the chance of the tables to ſupport and to triumph in the war? Let Mr. Burke and Lord Fitzwilliam anſwer theſe queſtions, reſpectable witneſſes as they are, from the conſiſtency of their teſtimony.—

Digitized by Google

Let them tell us upon their honours, where was the difference between this new order of things expreſſed in the King's meſſage, and the old order of things, which was with them and miniſters together, *and ſtill with them*, the foundation of the war with France, and the flame that fed it from the beginning. How could we then be ſo weak as to expect, that a moſt ſubtle, inſulted, and enraged enemy, would believe what we do not believe ourſelves, and what no man of common ſenſe ever did, or to the end of the world will believe!

But ſuppoſing theſe obſervations to be out of the queſtion, was there any thing in the mode of Mr. Wickham's propoſition as connected with the antecedent or with the exiſting relations of the two countries, which gave it even the air of a ſerious and manly embaſſy from one great ſtate at war with another? Mr. Wickham had no diplomatic character conferred upon him for the purpoſe of negociation—he was only the miniſter to the Swiſs cantons: he had no ſpecific inſtructions from his court on the ſubject, except indeed thoſe which he communicated to Mr. Barthelemi, viz. "That he was NOT IN ANY MANNER AUTHORIZED TO ENTER WITH HIM INTO ANY NEGOCIATION OR DISCUSSION UPON THE SUBJECT OF HIS NOTE."

The object, therefore, of Mr. Wickham's propoſition, and the extent of this authority, were to pump M. Barthelemi. A new title in the code of diplomacy,

Digitized by Google

macy, perfectly suitable to the novel principles upon which the war had been engaged. But what must be decisive with every thinking person, that ministers were rather seeking for some public justification for continuing the war than anxiously looking for an opening towards peace, is their conduct upon receiving the answer of France transmitted to Mr. Wickham.

This answer, like the late one to Lord Malmesbury at Paris, set up the French constitution as an absolute bar to the cession of any part of the territory of the republic, but in other respects inviting negotiation.

Now I am not at all about to justify this pretension of France, far less the reason of it, which I consider to be perfectly frivolous, and unworthy of a great and enlightened nation in its communication with another; but for that very reason I consider the answer as more favourable for continuance of negotiation than if she had refused the cession on the ground of national safety produced by the aggressions of the confederacy; because as no determination was expressed to keep Belgium, except for a reason which further discussion might well have shewn to be no reason at all, it appears to me to have opened to ministers (had they really been anxious for peace) a far better opportunity for keeping negotiation open, than when they afterwards sent Lord Malmesbury to Paris to recommence it; and which,

Digitized by Google if

if accompanied with a gentleneſs and frankneſs, not only conſiſtent with, but the very characteriſtic of, independence and greatneſs, might have been attended with the moſt ſalutary conſequences. Inſtead of this, what was the conduct of the very men who now talk to us of their ſincerity, and who demand our confidence as peace-makers?

Although Mr. Wickham's note was a collateral, private, and, I might almoſt ſay, a confidential communication from Mr. Wickham to M. Barthelemi, to ſound the diſpoſitions of the French government as a channel to further communications; yet no ſooner was this anſwer given, and by the ſame collateral mode of communication we had ourſelves preſcribed, than we immediately and eagerly ſeized the opportunity of officially * publiſhing it to all Europe in the name of the Court of London, making it the vehicle of freſh abuſe upon France, and of a new ſpur to the vigorous proſecution of the war.

But what is worſt of all (and for which, in my opinion, miniſters deſerve the ſevereſt cenſure and puniſhment), they dictated in this note a language for their ſovereign to all the courts of Europe, containing a pledge ſcarcely preſerved already, and from which, perhaps, it may be wiſdom hereafter wholly to depart. "*While theſe diſpoſitions ſhall be perſiſted in,*" (ſays the note of the court of London, adverting to the refuſal

* Vide the note dated 10th of April, 1796, lately publiſhed for the uſe of the two Houſes of Parliament.

to

Digitized by Google

to disannex any part of the French territory) "*nothing* "*is left for the King but to prosecute a war equally just* "*and necessary.*" The note then goes on to say, "*that whenever the King's enemies should manifest* "MORE *pacific sentiments, his Majesty would* THEN "*concur with his allies in measures the best calculated* "*to restore peace.*"

Now let us see how well his Majesty's ministers have maintained this dignified language of their Sovereign; let us examine whether, for the mere purpose of obtaining money for the prosecuting their favourite war, they did not hold out fallacious hopes of peace when not a shadow of new hope existed; whether they did not make his Majesty *lower the tone of his public declaration to all Europe*, by sending a public embassy to Paris without any manifestations of more pacific sentiments in our enemies; and whether, for the mere occasion, they did not falsely create a strong sensation in the public mind on the subject of peace. Whether they did not tacitly, and in substance, hold out that something important had happened since the date of the circular note of the court of London, opening a new prospect of treating with effect, although they knew that things were not merely in the same condition, but in a much worse; because the interval had not been employed in conciliatory conduct; because the French might have been expected to be more haughty by recent successes, which were beyond the reach of imagination in the March preceding; and because, nevertheless, ministers had

Digitized by Google

had privately reſolved to reſiſt their former pretenſions oppoſed to Mr. Wickham's negotiation by an abſolute *ſine qua non* in the front of the new one to be ſet on foot.

It would be an affront to the public to maintain by argument what ſpeaks for itſelf, yet, to preſerve the thread of the proceeding, ſome notice muſt be taken of this important embaſſy.

I have long had the honour to be well acquainted with Lord Malmeſbury; I greatly reſpect his diplomatic talents, and I ſee no reaſon to change my opinion from any thing which is perſonal to him in the late negotiation. I lament the narrowneſs of his powers, and, indeed, if I were perſonally his enemy, I might as well abuſe the bell-man, if I received a libel by the poſt, as reflect upon a meſſenger becauſe he happens to be called an ambaſſador.

From the 9th of April laſt, the date of the circular note of the court of London, till the opening of the new Parliament in November, which announced Lord Malmeſbury's miſſion, no intermediate ſtep towards negotiation had been taken; and a very ſtrong ſenſation began to prevail in the public mind on the ſubject. From the enormous public expenditure more alarming difficulties, in the way of the ſupplies, were at the ſame time approaching than any Britiſh miniſter ever had to encounter. The ordinary plan of a common loan was abandoned; and, as it was impoſſible

Digitized by Google

poſſible to foreſee with certainty the reſources which the overflowing zeal of the public ſo rapidly provided, ſchemes of finance wholly new to England, and alien to her conſtitution, were publicly in agitation. Nothing, indeed, but Lord Malmeſbury's miſſion could probably have prevented the experiment; but a direct motion towards peace by a dignified embaſſy, and the proſpect of obtaining it, which was induſtriouſly held out alſo, naturally animated the public zeal, and ſupplied with popularity the neceſſities of government.

To give time for this operation, was the obvious plan of the forms in which Lord Malmeſbury was inſtructed to negotiate. Miniſters had determined (no matter whether properly or not) to inſiſt, that Belgium ſhould not continue to be a part of France. The French Directory, on the other hand, (no matter whether properly or not) had determined not to cede it; and this determination they had publicly expreſſed in the month of March preceding. If England, therefore, with this determination of diſannexing Belgium as a *ſine qua non*, the propriety of which I am ſtill not diſcuſſing, had really ſet on foot the negotiation, with a view to aſcertain whether France ſtill perſiſted in this unjuſt and unfounded pretenſion, as expreſſed by M. Barthelemi to Mr. Wickham, the buſineſs could not have laſted a day. It would of courſe have begun with a direct reference to the formerly expreſſed determination in March; it would have contained a candid, and, in my opinion,

Digitized by Google

an eaſy refutation of its principles, and would have demanded an anſwer. This ſimple courſe would have brought the matter to an inſtantaneous concluſion. But, inſtead of this direct and obvious procedure, what do the papers which have been laid on the table of the Houſe of Commons really contain? what have been the proceedings of this embaſſy, which ſeaſonably occupied ſo many weeks, amuſing the Engliſh public while the loan was tranſacting?

The whole proceeding is neither more nor leſs than this—the court of London having reſolved upon a *ſine qua non*, which they did not at firſt communicate, and which was in direct oppoſition to the former public *ſine qua non* of France, as expreſſed in the March preceding, propoſe mutual compenſation as the baſis of negotiation. The Executive Directory, being determined not to adopt *that* baſis of compenſation which ſhould break in upon their former determination, not to cede the territory of the republic, anſwer, that they cannot accept compenſation as a baſis, unleſs they know what it comprehends, and they therefore demand of Lord Malmeſbury to ſtate his ſpecific propoſition of compenſation. This demand the ambaſſador, in purſuance of his inſtructions, of courſe refuſes, until the Directory ſhould firſt admit the baſis. After a conſiderable length of time in this diſpute about nothing, the French Directory, who never meant, nor in common ſenſe could mean, that mutual compenſation *(the baſis of every poſſible peace)* ſhould not be the baſis of the propoſed one, but who were

Digitized by Google

were only determined not to accept *that* baſis of compenſation which comprehended the Netherlands, at laſt conſent to remove this ridiculous ſtumbling-block, and, by M. Delacroix's letter to Lord Malmeſbury the 27th of November, they hold this language to him, which accordingly removed it.

" *Our anſwer, of the 5th and 22d of laſt Brumaire,*
" *contained an acknowledgement of the principle of com-*
" *penſation, by aſking you to ſtate what it comprehended.*
" *But to avoid all farther pretext of diſcuſſion on the*
" *ſubject, the Executive Directory now makes the poſi-*
" *tive declaration of ſuch acknowledgement, and Lord*
" *Malmeſbury is accordingly again invited in the terms*
" *of the propoſal of 22d Brumaire, to deſignate without*
" *delay and expreſsly the objects of reciprocal compen-*
" *ſation which he has to propoſe.*"

Now if peace, or the *inſtant* alternative between peace and war, had been the ſerious object of this embaſſy, was not a man of the ambaſſador's high dignity and great capacity to be entruſted with even a ſingle term which conſtituted the *ſine qua non* of his embaſſy? that ſingle term was not, however, entruſted to Lord Malmeſbury; and after the public mind was kept ſtretched upon the rack of impatience, the ambaſſador had no anſwer at all to give upon the ſubject, but deſired to conſult his court. The reaſon of this ſtrange departure from the ordinary and natural courſe of negotiation, in the hands of a high and accompliſhed ambaſſador, all the world is already

Digitized by Google

aware of. Procraſtination was moſt material, not only from the particular circumſtance of the loan, but from the critical ſtate of the war. When the embaſſy was firſt projected, we were in the loweſt ebb of diſgrace and misfortune. We had nothing left to cover our nakedneſs but what we had torn from the Dutch, for whoſe protection to went to war; and our laſt ally, the Emperor, was likely to be even beſieged in his capital: but whilſt Lord Malmeſbury was at Paris, the unexampled ſpirit and gallantry of the Archduke Charles changed the face of things, and the ſeaſon became favourable for negotiation to lie upon its oars.

At laſt, however, the ſpecified demand of compenſation, which every body is acquainted with, was tranſmitted to, and delivered by Lord Malmeſbury, in which England demanded reſtitution to the Emperor, on the footing of the *ſtatus ante bellum*. This demand was not expreſſed in terms as a *ſine qua non*, or ultimatum, upon the face of the confidential memorial; but in the collateral diſcuſſions with M. Delacroix, it *was* expreſſed as a POSITIVE ULTIMATUM *that Belgium ſhould not remain as part of France*. This appears by Lord Malmeſbury's letter to Lord Grenville in the following words *: "*You then perſiſt, ſaid "M. Delacroix, in applying this principle to Belgium?*

* This letter is very creditable to Lord Malmeſbury; it never could be intended for publication, yet it has all the perſpicuity, correctneſs, and elegance, of the moſt ſtudied performance.

"I an-

Digitized by Google

" *I answered most certainly: and I should not deal fairly* " *with you if I hesitated to declare in the outset of the* " *negotiation,* THAT ON THIS POINT YOU MUST EN- " TERTAIN NO EXPECTATION THAT HIS MAJESTY " WILL RELAX, OR EVER CONSENT TO SEE BELGIUM " A PART OF FRANCE." And again in the same letter, " *he,*" M. Delacroix, " *again asked me,* " *whether in his report he was to state the disuniting* " *Belgium as a* fine qua non *from which his Majesty* " *would not depart; I replied,* IT MOST CERTAINLY " WAS A SINE QUA NON FROM WHICH HIS MAJESTY " WOULD NOT DEPART." And again in the very next paragraph, " *M. Delacroix repeated his concern* " *at the peremptory way in which I made this assertion;* " *and asked whether it would admit of no modification,* " *I replied, if France could in a* contre projet, *point out* " *a practicable and adequate one,* STILL KEEPING IN " VIEW THAT THE NETHERLANDS MUST NOT BE " FRENCH, OR LIKELY AGAIN TO FALL INTO THE " HANDS OF FRANCE, *such a proposal might certainly* " *be taken into consideration.*"

This *last* expression, which has been considered as opening the negociation, by the admission of a *contre projet,* not only re-insists upon the original *sine qua non,* but even adds another, not expressed before; for Lord Malmesbury adds, that this *contre projet* must not only keep in view, that Belgium should not be French, which he had said before; " *but, that it* " *should not be again likely to fall into the hands of* " *France.*"

This

Digitized by Google

This private diſcuſſion being finiſhed, M. Delacroix, but without poſitive inſtructions, expreſſed his own apprehenſion, that this would terminate the negotiation, and tranſmitted the note and confidential memorial to his government.

The Executive Directory having received them, and having learned undoubtedly from M. Delacroix, by Lord Malmeſbury's permiſſion, that the retroceſſion of Belgium from France, *though not officially expreſſed in the memorial as an ultimatum*, was nevertheleſs abſolutely inſiſted on *as ſuch*, they demanded of Lord Malmeſbury that he would ſend his ultimatum *officially in writing*. This demand was expreſſed in the following words: "*And to require of you to "give into me* officially, *in twenty-four hours, your "ultimatum ſigned by you.*"

This required ultimatum had undoubtedly a pointed reference to Belgium, and cannot be conſidered as a requiſition of an ultimatum upon every collateral point of negociation. It ſeems to have been ſo underſtood by Lord Malmeſbury himſelf; for his Lordſhip referring to his official note, and alſo to his verbal declarations to M. Delacroix, *connecting them properly together*, expreſſes himſelf thus: "*He therefore "can add nothing to the aſſurances which he has already "given to the miniſter for foreign affairs, as* well by "word of mouth *as in his official note.*"

This

Digitized by Google

This anſwer from Lord Malmeſbury, which was correct, explicit, and manly, incorporated by inference the *unofficial ſine qua non*, delivered verbally to M. Delacroix, with *the official demand of the ſtatus ante bellum*, contained in the confidential memorial. The Directory conſidered it as ſuch, and therefore repeated their former ultimatum on that point, as expreſſed in the March preceding to Mr. Wickham, viz. "*That they would liſten to no propoſal contrary to "the conſtitution, to the laws, and to the treaties which "bind the Republic.*" This anſwer being ultimatum againſt ultimatum, upon a particular point, the negotiation was brought to an inevitable concluſion; and it is ſelf-evident, that this muſt have been its fate in one day or in one hour, if Great Britain, aware, with the reſt of Europe, of the former determination of France regarding Belgium, and determined to continue to reſiſt that pretenſion, had aſked her *at once* whether ſhe would conſent to modify or to abandon it.

When the details of this negociation came to be conſidered in the Houſe of Commons, on the 30th of December laſt, the miniſter diſplayed all that dexterity and ability, for which he is ſo remarkable. His object was to conceal from the Houſe theſe obvious concluſions which ſtare one in the face from reading the preceedings, and to incenſe the Parliament and the nation at the inſolent unfounded pretences of France, which defeated, by their unparalleled abſurdity and inadmiſſibility, the earneſt anxiety

of

Digitized by Google

of miniſters for peace. He wiſely, therefore, and ably, and dexterouſly, kept in the back ground the thing refuſed, which formed the obſtacle.—He prudently ſuppreſſed the details of his own adminiſtration, which had given to France both the power and the temper to refuſe the demanded ceſſion of Belgium, and brought forward, with the greateſt addreſs, the unfounded reaſons for the refuſal; reaſons, which I am the laſt man to ſupport; which I think are abſurd and ridiculous, but which were, in fact, very little to the argument of our ſituation. Mr. Pitt knew this, and therefore ſeized upon it as the weak point of his adverſary. He made it every thing in his view of conſidering the termination of the negociation, and triumphed with the Houſe by a forcible and elequent, but, for the following reaſons, a fallacious ſtatement.

The danger of ſuffering Belgium to remain with France was much ſunk in his argument, and the evil mainly inſiſted upon was her *unfounded reaſon* for reſiſting the ceſſion. He not only enlarged upon the injuſtice of a nation finally annexing a territory acquired during war*; but appealing to the French

* *Mr. Pitt appears to have forgotten the annexation of Corſica, by his Majeſty's ſolemn acceptance of its crown; and I will not inſult the King, by ſuppoſing, that if the fate of war had permitted it, and the Corſicans had claimed our protection as the price of their accepted allegiance, our gracious ſovereign would have abandoned them to the poſſible reſentment of their former governors. However, as the crown was accepted without the conſent of Parliament, the difficulty might have been got over, and miniſters might have denied that Corſica had ever been legally annexed to the Britiſh crown.*

conſti-

Digitized by Google

conſtitution, he denied that it eſtabliſhed its annexation. This part of the miniſter's ſpeech was by far the moſt laboured, argumentative, and ingenious; inſomuch, that I could not help being ſtruck, in the moment, with the force of that characteriſtic infirmity, which ſeems to impel him as it were, by a law of his nature, always to act upon one principle under the pretext of another.

If the poſſeſſion of Belgium by France, from its extent of coaſt and other local circumſtances, be really ſo dangerous to England in her inſular character, or as connected in intereſt with the political balances of the continent, that it is ſound policy to continue the war at all events, in the hopes of compelling its reſtitution, then the defence of the miniſter for his *preſent* conduct would be ſubſtantial; but it is plain that his defence in that caſe would be founded upon the refuſal of France to give up Belgium, and not upon the reaſons for which ſhe refuſed it.

To try the force of this reaſoning, let me ſuppoſe ſhe had been willing to cede Belgium, and every territory of any conſequence demanded of her, with the exception of ſome inſignificant fort or town, which ſhe had refuſed upon the footing of annexation during the war, under her conſtitution. Let me further ſuppoſe (which is neceſſary for bringing the touchſtone to the argument), that it was admitted the thing refuſed was of no conſequence or value to Great Britain. In ſuch a caſe, is any man prepared to

Digitized by Google

contend, that we ought to continue the war, *not for the ceſſion of additional territory*, but to beat the French out of an unfounded reaſon for refuſing what we did not want? Having been at war ſo long to deſtroy her whole conſtitution, and having at laſt abandoned its deſtruction, were we now to continue it only to batter this chip from off a corner of it? Or, admitting the conſtitution of France to be a rule for France, were we to ſpend a hundred millions more to prove that ſhe did not underſtand her own conſtitution, and that Mr. Pitt was the only able commentator upon the text of it? To do Mr. Pitt juſtice, notwithſtanding his public pretences, he does not ſeriouſly entertain ſuch an abſurdity. The putting forward the reaſon of refuſal which is unfounded and fallacious, and keeping back the view of the real queſtion, the value of the thing refuſed, and the chance of retrieving it by continuing the war, was only the parade and juggle of the day. It was to hide from the Houſe and the Country, THAT WE WERE ACTUALLY TO BE AT WAR FOR BELGIUM.

To put this plain truth beyond the reach of controverſy, let me ſuppoſe (to expoſe our ſtate quackery) that France were to abandon the ground of political annexation altogether, and to aſſert, as ſhe has to her own people, her poſſeſſion of the Netherlands upon the principle of ſafety againſt future aggreſſion from the northern powers of Europe—ſhould we, in that event, be nearer to a peace? The beſt anſwer to this queſtion is an appeal to the King's firſt note delivered

by

Digitized by Google

by Lord Malmeſbury, wherein originated the baſis of negotiation. The ceſſion of Belgium to the Emperor is there propoſed by the King upon the footing, that the ſacred obligation of his crown, and the force of treaties, rendered it binding upon his Majeſty to demand it,

Upon *this* baſis of negotiation it is plain, that the refuſal of ceſſion, whatever might have been the reaſon for it, or a refuſal *without a reaſon*, muſt equally have terminated the negotiation; becauſe the ſacred obligations of his Majeſty's crown, and the binding force of treaties, have no relation whatever to the reſiſtance of arrogant pretenſions of France againſt the law of nations, but apply wholly to the duty impoſed upon his Majeſty to obtain for the Emperor the poſſeſſion of the Netherlands,

THE WAR IS THEREFORE CONTINUED AT THIS MOMENT IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SINE QUA NON OF GREAT BRITAIN, WHICH IS BELGIUM, AND NOT AT ALL UPON THE REASON GIVEN WHY THAT SINE QUA NON IS RESISTED; ſince it is plain, that if the ceſſion of Belgium to the Emperor be our *ultimatum*, the refuſal of yielding to that ultimatum muſt have been an abſolute bar to peace, whatever might have been the reaſon of refuſing to accede to it, or though no reaſon had been given by the party refuſing.

THE BRITISH NATION IS THEREFORE AT THI MOMENT AT WAR FOR BELGIUM; ſince, ſuppoſing all

Digitized by Google

other obſtacles could be removed, this territory, upon the footing of the late negotiation, remains an inſuperable bar to peace; England inſiſting to demand, and France to refuſe it.

But is the annexation of Belgium, thus artfully put forward, as if it were the grand embarraſſment, the only reaſon given or entertained by France for refuſing the demanded ceſſion? We know the contrary. It appears from M. Delacroix's diſcuſſion with Lord Malmeſbury, that though it could not be ceded by an act of the executive power, and conſequently not by the Directory, as the baſis of a treaty, yet that it might be done by the convocation of primary aſſemblies; but France has given other public and official reaſons to her own ſubjects (and which are unqueſtionably her real ones) why this courſe is not likely to be taken, and why the ceſſion of Belgium will probably not be admitted.

Theſe reaſons involve miniſters in that deep reſponſibility which it has been the object of theſe pages to make plain to the Britiſh nation. France conſiders the original annexation of Belgium as an act of neceſſity impoſed upon her by the aggreſſion of confederated Europe, and ſhe maintains the poſſeſſion of it againſt the future aſſaults of the ſame conſpiracy.

Until the treaty of Pilnitz had been framed for the deſtruction of her conſtitution, and the diſmemberment of her empire, ſhe had not extended its limits.

The

Digitized by Google

The hoſtile ſyſtem of Europe againſt France had been reſolved on, and the Emperor had actually begun the war, before the Netherlands were invaded. The entreaties of Louis the Sixteenth to the Emperor Joſeph to deſiſt from his purpoſes, and to maintain the tranquillity of Europe, were moſt earneſt and affecting. They bore his name as King of the French; and though they were the public acts of his miniſters, yet their ſincerity was avowed and inſiſted on by that moſt unfortunate prince upon his trial, and ſhortly before his death. Long after the war was raging in Europe, and when his fate became hourly more critical by the ill-omened protection of deſpots, the ſame earneſt appeal was made by him to the councils of Great Britain; our mediation with the Emperor was earneſtly entreated, and haughtily refuſed; the continuation of peace, on the renunciation of conqueſt and aggrandizement, was alſo humbly offered, and with the ſame loftineſs rejected.

The ſame offers were renewed on the part of the republic, and were not merely reſiſted, but repelled with inſult, by the ſudden diſmiſſion of the ambaſſador from the kingdom.

Since that period Europe and France have been oppoſed to each other. If the combined princes could at any time have penetrated through Alſatia, or through the Netherlands, into the territories of the republic, the republic muſt have fallen. And could

Digitized by Google

could they do ſo to-morrow, France muſt feel that her independence would be endangered. This ſituation probably produced the annexation of the Netherlands, and the ſenſe of ſimilar dangers now oppoſes its retroceſſion.

Theſe are facts; and they not only expoſe the miſconduct of miniſters, but demonſtrate, that whilſt their ſyſtem of policy remains in force, there is no hope that France, feeling a ſenſe of ſecurity, will relax from demands which a natural anxiety for ſecurity has ſuggeſted.

I can have no pleaſure in adverting to this calamitous proſpect. But it is not by concealing the public diſtemper that its cure can be effected —to heal the wound, it muſt be probed.—If I am charged (as Mr. Fox lately was in the Houſe of Commons) with ſuggeſting arguments to the enemy, I anſwer, that they are not my private arguments, but the public arguments of France; that, to pluck them from her mouth, we muſt by wiſe councils change the temper that dictates them, and by removing her ſenſe of danger which gives them ſtrength with her people, detach her from the ſyſtem ſhe purſues. Let us not deceive ourſelves—nations and the councils of nations are made up of men; and their operations muſt invariably be purſued upon human intereſts and mixed up with human paſſions. Upon this principle I deſire to aſk, whether Great Britain, under the direction of her preſent councils, can

Digitized by Google

can expect from France, whom they have ſo long thruſt out from the pale of civil ſociety, the ſame temper and conceſſion as if the war had been conducted upon the ordinary principles of belligerent nations? It may be *very deſirable*, that, upon the firſt moment of our return to our ſenſes, all theſe things ſhould be forgotten and overlooked; but is it in the nature of human affairs that this ſhould happen?

Let us aſſimilate a conteſt with a nation compoſed of men, to a quarrel with an individual man, in ſo rude a ſtate of ſociety as that there ſhould be no certain law to give a rule for both. The analogy is a cloſe one, becauſe nations have no common ſuperior. If, inſtead of differing with a man upon ſome intelligible point of controverſy, ſome diſtinct claim of poſſeſſion violated, or ſome perſonal inſult unredreſſed, and for which I demanded ſatisfaction, I ſhould proclaim him as a wretch unfit for the exerciſe of ſocial life, combine all his neighbours to deſtroy his dwelling, and invite his children and ſervants to rob and murder him, until inſulted nature, ſummoning up more than ordinary ſtrength, might enable him to reſiſt the conſpiracy, to enlarge his boundaries on the ſide from whence the attacks had been made, and to ſet his houſe in order for the return of domeſtic life:—ſuppoſe I ſhould then ſuddenly affect to ſee a great change in him, and were to declare that I now found him to be a man capable of neighbourhood, and that if he would reſtore to his neighbours what

Digitized by Google

what he had taken from them I would be at peace with him; whilſt human nature is human nature, what anſwer might I expect? He would ſay undoubtedly—If I believed you to be ſincere, and that you and my neighbours, againſt whom I have been compelled to take ſecurity, were in earneſt to keep the peace with me, I might be diſpoſed to liſten to your propoſition. I told you originally that I had no wiſh to enlarge my boundaries, and that I only deſired to be at peace: but now, if I remove it, what ſecurity have I, that, when your bruiſes are healed, brought on by your own violence, I may not be the victim of a freſh conſpiracy when I may be leſs able to reſiſt it? I muſt, therefore, keep what you compelled me for my own ſecurity to occupy. I have, beſides, borrowed money upon the property I was thus entitled to take; the occupants have laid out money on them; they aſſiſted me in my diſtreſs; they prevented my utter ruin by your conſpiracy; and I have ſworn not to deſert them. This would be the anſwer of every man, and of every nation under heaven, when the proud provokers of ſtrife are the baffled propoſers of peace.

With regard to the actual danger of ſuffering Belgium to remain with France, I am not ſufficiently maſter of the ſubject to be qualified publicly to diſcuſs it. It involves many weighty conſiderations, and is a fair ſubject of political difference. But

Digitized by Google

But I lay in my claim that the conſideration of its importance may always be diſcuſſed with a reference to the probability of regaining it, and the price at which it muſt be regained. Let it never be forgotten that by purſuing it through war, though upon the principle of ſecurity, we may regain it a price which leaves us nothing to ſecure; which breaks up our credit, and diſſolves our government.

It is remarkable that moſt of the arguments which are now employed to vindicate the rejection of peace until Belgium can be ſeparated from the French republic, are the conſiderations of diſtant and contingent conſequences; and theſe arguments are loud and vehement in the mouths of thoſe very men who ſcorned all conſequences, however immediate, when they were oppoſed to the ſyſtem of the war. It has appeared that when they began the conteſt they refuſed to look at its moſt obvious and calamitous conſequences, and when warned of them in every ſtage towards their accompliſhment, they rejected them with diſdain as vague and viſionary ſpeculations. But now, when it becomes convenient to hold up conſequences in order to juſtify the continuation of hoſtilities begun and proſecuted in utter contempt of them, they themſelves enter into ſpeculations the moſt diſtant and moſt doubtful ever reſorted to by ſtateſmen. To diſappoint the advantages of peace, they look much farther forward into futurity than they were aſked

Digitized by Google

by their opponents, in order to avert the horrors of war. They eſtimate, with all the anxiety of intereſted objection, every ſiniſter conſequence of a treaty which would leave France with an extended territory, and augur other dangers to Great Britain upon the moſt remote and uncertain contingencies. Surely this is the very reverſe of that conduct which policy and morality univerſally dictate. War is in itſelf ſo mighty an evil, either politically or morally conſidered; it entails ſo many miſeries upon mankind, even after the attainment of all its objects, that it ought never to be engaged in until after every effort and ſpeculation have been employed to repel its approach. Peace, on the other hand, is the parent of ſo many bleſſings, that all nations ought to run into her embraces with an ardour which no diſtant or doubtful apprehenſions ſhould repel. What then muſt be the reſponſibility of the raſh and precipitate authors of war, and the uniformly backward negotiators of its termination?

This fatal and obſtinate miſconduct is hourly producing the moſt calamitous effects. The difference, though totally diverted from its original principle, has changed to another equally irrational. It began with an object in the nature of things unattainable, and for that very reaſon has reduced us to a contention for another which cannot be attained. Its authors are ſo completely bewitched with it, that in their zeal to preſerve it they

Digitized by Google

they ſeem totally to have forgotten both the old ground on which they firſt made it, and the new one upon which they continue it. The only principle which has invariably diſtinguiſhed all the periods of it, has been, that the extended territories of France were leſs dangerous than the changes wrought by her ſyſtem in the minds of their inhabitants; that conqueſt was inſignificant when compared with proſelytiſm; and yet for the ſake of diſannexing Belgium merely as a territory, with a view to ſea coaſt, and to continental balances, they are ſuffering, whilſt I am writing, the whole face of the earth to be rapidly changing under their eyes, by the continuance of war; the authors contenting themſelves with railing here at home againſt republican theoriſts, who never exiſted but in their own imaginations, whilſt they themſelves are the practical founders of republics all over Europe, which exiſted at firſt in their own imaginations alſo, but which they have ſince ſubſtantially realiſed by their works.

It is truly lamentable that this reflection, inſtead of being a ſarcaſm upon government, falls very ſhort of the truth. The war is profeſſedly continued at this moment for another campaign or more, as circumſtances may ariſe; juſt as if it could be ſo kept up, upon the mere calculation of expence, to be put down again, like an eſtabliſhment or an equipage, at the call of convenience or prudence. In the mean time the

Digitized by Google

great regular governments of Europe, diſſolved from their union, and exhauſted by their efforts, are becoming feeble as adverſaries, and contemptible to their own ſubjects, whilſt the ſmaller ſtates of Italy, from which France might have been withdrawn by a cordial and manly negotiation, are now ſtarting up into new conditions of ſociety, under the faſcinating banners of glory and victory; and England, inſtead of dictating a conſtitution, and boundaries to the French republic, or ſettling at Paris the imaginary balances of Europe, may be probably ſoon driven to fight againſt her upon Engliſh ground for her own conſtitution; whilſt the waſte and anticipation of her reſources nouriſhes diſguſt and alienation to its excellent principles, and deſtroys that enthuſiaſm which nothing but the practical enjoyment of good government can inſpire.

But to ſpeak plainly and boldly my opinion with regard to peace, it is this---That when the relative ſituations of the two countries are conſidered, the ceſſion of Belgium to the Emperor, the arrangement concerning St. Domingo, or any other ſpecific line of negotiation, are as duſt in the balance when compared with THE SPIRIT AND TEMPER of the peace which hereafter ſhall be made.

Suppoſing by our great reſources, and by the chances of war, we could drive the government of France

Digitized by Google

France to recede from her preſent pretenſions, *not* upon the approach of a new æra of ſecurity, confidence, and friendſhip, but to avoid a political exploſion by the deſtruction of her credit: conſider cooly what ſort of peace this would be—where the hoſtile mind remained;---conſider how eaſily France might again embroil us to the hazard of our finances, and of our conſtitution which leans abſolutely upon public credit for ſupport. The excitation, therefore, which prevails at preſent to artificial hatred and diſtruſt of France, is a moſt fatal and ruinous policy for England. No man is leſs diſpoſed than I am to ſurrender an atom of the principles of our fathers to French, or to any other principles. I ſhall, on the contrary, be found at all times amongſt the foremoſt to aſſert them, becauſe I have been bred, beyond moſt others, to know their value: but the ſoundneſs of our inſtitutions, the attachment which muſt follow from a pure adminiſtration of them, and their mortal connection with the public credit of the ſtate, convince me that our ſalvation muſt abſolutely depend upon a ſpeedy and LIBERAL peace ſought "*in the ſpirit of peace, and laid in principles purely* "*pacific.*" Theſe laſt words are the words of Mr. Burke; they were employed by him whilſt, to uſe his own expreſſion, "we yet worked in the light," ---they were employed by him to ſhew the means by which America might have been brought back to a profitable ſubjection to Great Britain, which,

if

Digitized by Google

if ſhe had been, all the calamities that have ſince deſolated Europe would have been averted.

The writings of Mr. Burke have had a great and extenſive influence in producing and continuing this fatal conteſt. Let us avail ourſelves, then, of the great wiſdom of his former writings to lay the foundations of peace.

When an extraordinary perſon appears in the world, and adds to its lights by ſuperior maxims of policy and wiſdom, he cannot afterwards deſtroy their benefits by any contradictions, real or apparent, in his reaſonings or in his conduct. We are not to receive the works of men as revelations, but as the chequered productions of our imperfect natures, from which, by the help of our own reaſonings, we are ſeaſonably to ſeparate the good from the evil. This is the true courſe to be taken with all human authorities. It is a poor triumph to diſcover that man is not perfect, and an imprudent uſe of the diſcovery to reject his wiſdom, when the very fault we find with his infirmities is, that they tend to deprive us of its advantages. Differing wholly from Mr. Burke, and lamenting the conſequences of his late writings, I always think of the books and of the author in this kind of temper. Indeed when I look into my own mind, and find its beſt lights and principles fed from that immenſe magazine of moral and political wiſdom, which he has left as an inheritance to mankind for their

Digitized by Google

their inſtruction, I feel myſelf repelled by an awful and grateful ſenſibility from petulantly approaching him.*

I recollect that his late writings cannot deceive me, becauſe his former ones have fortified me againſt their deceptions. When I look beſides at his inveterate conſiſtency even to this hour, when all ſupport from men and things have been withdrawn from him; when I compare him with thoſe who took up his errors only for their own convenience, and for the ſame convenience laid them down again, he riſes to ſuch a deceptive height from the compariſon, that with my eyes fixed upon miniſters, I view him as if upon an eminence too high to be approached.

The principles upon which Mr. Burke founded the whole ſyſtem of his conciliation with America, were not narrow and temporary, but permanent and univerſal. They were not applicable only to a diſpute between a mother country and her colonies, but to every poſſible controverſy between equal and independent nations; they were not ſubject to variation from the tempers and characters of the contending parties, becauſe being

* If reference is had to the arguments of the author during the ſtate trials. In the trial of Mr. Paine, and upon ſeveral other occaſions, he will be found to have uniformly purſued this courſe with regard to Mr. Burke.

founded

Digitized by Google

founded in human nature they embraced the whole world of man.

The maxims of pacification which he laid down were plain and ſimple, but for that very reaſon were the wiſer. Wiſdom does not conſiſt in complexity; the ſyſtem of the univerſe is leſs intricate than a country clock.

The firſt grand maxim which I before adverted to, and which, in truth, includes all others, was, that peace is not beſt ſought "*through the medium "of war, nor to be hunted through the labyrinth of "endleſs negotiation; but was to be ſought in the ſpirit "of peace, and laid in principles purely pacific.*" He inculcated, that crimination and recrimination was not the courſe by which any human controverſy was to be ended; and, above all he proteſted againſt the ruling vice and impolicy of the preſent adminiſtration, who have never had any definable ſyſtem of peace or warfare, who have always mixed the bitterneſs of reproach with propoſitions for conciliation, and have uniformly brandiſhed the ſword in one hand with more irritating menace, at the very moment they were holding forth the olive branch in the other.

This we did alſo in the American war---the repealing acts which we paſſed to ſoothe America, were generally carried out in the ſame ſhip with new penal bills to coerce them. This induced Mr. Burke in Parliament to expreſs his doubts of their

Digitized by Google

their efficacy:—"You ſend out an angel of peace, "but you ſend out a deſtroying angel along with "her, and what will be the effects of the conflict "of theſe adverſe ſpirits is what I dare not ſay. "Whether the lenient meaſures will cauſe paſſion "to ſubſide, or the ſeverer increaſe its fury: all "this is in the hands of Providence; yet now, "even now, I ſhould confide in the prevailing "virtue and efficacious operation of lenity, "though working in darkneſs and in chaos. In "the midſt of this unnatural and turbid combina-"tion, I ſhould hope it might produce order and "beauty in the end."*

I have never paſſed this ſentence through my mind, where it has been preſent for many years, without being deeply affected by it. Its eloquence is only valuable as it makes the moral and political truth ſink deeper into the underſtanding and the heart. The angel of peace dreſſed in ſmiles and cloathed with her own mild attributes, is not merely deſcribed as triumphing in the blue ſerene, where only ordinary paſſions are to be oppoſed to her; but, as if Mr. Burke had looked forward to his own picture of the French revolution, he truſts to her operation, though working in darkneſs and in chaos, in the midſt of unnatural and turbid combination, and looks forward from her preſence to order and beauty in the end.

* Mr. Burke's Speech in the Houſe of Commons, 29th of April, 1774.

Digitized by Google

The unalterable effect of this genuine ſpirit and principle of peace, it is but juſtice to Mr. Burke to ſay, he has never fled from. He is in this perfectly conſiſtent with himſelf; he, of courſe, does not agree with the plan I am ſuggeſting, becauſe he propoſes no peace with France, becauſe he thinks the peace of the world would be ſacrificed by its attainment: but if he could once be brought to agree that peace was deſirable, I would be contented to ſtand or fall as he ſubſcribed to what I am propoſing. Grant but the premiſes of his late writings, and all his deductions are full of the ſame vigour, and lighted up with the ſame eloquence, which diſtinguiſh every thing he has written. It is his falſe premiſes only, that leads him aſtray, and make ſuch havoc in the world. But miniſters have no ſort of excuſe for their conduct; they profeſs to be ſincere in deſiring peace, yet they refuſe to purſue the only methods by which, between man and man, or between nation and nation, it ever was, or ever can be permanently ſecured.

I have no more doubt than I entertain of my own exiſtence, that if France ſaw a change in the Britiſh councils, and with that change a conſequent renunciation of the ſyſtem which produced the war, and which, though no longer avowed, notoriouſly obſtructs its termination, the face of things would be entirely altered. The conſequences of our miſguided councils would no

Digitized by Google

doubt load the negotiation, under whatever auſpices it might be produced. The ſtrong poſition which France has obtained, and the neceſſity to which England has reduced herſelf from the war, muſt be expected to be felt in the peace, whenever or by whomſoever it ſhall be made. But I look leſs to the terms, which I foreſee will raiſe the difficulties, and which beſides, may be ſmoothed and rounded by the ſpirit of conciliation, than I look to the future effects which that ſpirit would produce; to the ſolidity of the peace which would be foſtered under its wings; to the return of that good will and the liberal confidence between nations, by which the proſperity of each ſtrikes down freſh roots to the proſperity of all. Depend upon it, where peace is preſerved, and its true ſpirit cultivated, the world is large enough for all the nations which compoſe it. As they multiply in numbers, and increaſe in arts and improvements, traffic only becomes more extenſive and complicated; and traffic amongſt nations is like traffic amongſt individuals, he who has the greateſt capital, and the beſt ſituation for trade, ſtarts with an advantage which only imprudence can deſtroy.

This is ſtill the ſituation of Great Britain. Her immenſe capital taken with all its mortgages, and her vaſt poſſeſſions in every quarter of the globe, would get the ſtart of all Europe, toſs it and tumble it, and divide it as you will so AS PEACE ONLY CAN BE PRESERVED. It is war following

Digitized by Google

war,

war, and accumulating revenue, their inſeparable companions, that alone can deſtroy, and which has already nearly accompliſhed the deſtruction of Great Britain.

There is another ſuperior advantage attending this liberal ſyſtem of pacification, which, in former times, would have ſunk deep into the feelings of Engliſhmen. The NATION would ſuffer no humiliation, though *miniſters* would be diſgraced. Such a peace would be a peace of liberal choice, not, as we look forward to it at preſent, of baffled neceſſity. The peace of a free and independent nation, lamenting the errors and ſufferings of freedom, holding forth her ample ſhield to protect it every where, and laying the foundation of a tranquillity, which deſpotiſm never more ſhould diſturb. Compared with ſuch a proceeding, what is the wreſting of the ſea-ports of Oſtend and Antwerp, from France, in order to reſtore them to the Emperor, who in the tranſitions of things, may be the enemy of England to-morrow, whilſt France may be her ally.

The aſcendancy of France hereafter in the ſcale of Europe, whatever may be the ultimate terms of general tranquillity, muſt be always ſo very powerful, from the fertility and extent of her territory, her immenſe population, and the active genius of her people, that her relation to England can never be indifferent. She muſt always be a moſt deſira-

Digitized by Google

ble

ble ally, or a moſt formidable enemy. If we were truly friends upon liberal principles, war muſt for a century be baniſhed from the earth: if we continue at variance, from contemptible prejudices, it muſt be drowned in blood. When the complicated and claſhing intereſts of two great countries, almoſt joined together, are contemplated, the various cauſes of quarrel which intereſt might ſow, which jealouſy might quicken, and which falſe pride muſt be always ripening into war, humanity ſhrinks back from conſideration of the future. It is not for a very private man, like me, with no talents for a ſtateſman, and engaged beſides in the purſuits of a moſt laborious profeſſion, to comprehend, in my view, the detailed intereſts of Great Britain as they interſect the intereſts of France. But this I will ſay diſtinctly, that I would not accept the completeſt knowledge of all of them, nor the higheſt ſtation to bring them into action, unleſs I was conſcious of poſſeſſing, at the ſame time, the principles and the temper of turning them to the benefit of my country.

Without peace, and peace on a permanent baſis, this nation, with all the trade which the world wil furniſh, cannot ſupport her eſtabliſhments, and muſt paſs through bankruptcy into the jaws of revolution. All the qualifications of Britiſh ſtateſmen for details and management are therefore frivolous and contemptible, when compared with thoſe which fit them for peace-makers and

Digitized by Google for

for its guardianſhip when it is made. Cunning and haughtineſs are no parts of this character. Peace-makers, to denote their humility and ſimplicity, are ſtiled the *children of God*. For their own exaltation, our miniſters have ſufficiently humbled their country: let them at leaſt take it by turns, and, that their country may now be exalted, let them humble themſelves.

That an honourable peace might even now be obtained, if rationally and honeſtly purſued, every ſucceeding account eſtabliſhes and confirms. Proceedings now provoke the indignation of the enlightened part of that nation, which not long ago would have been a ſignal for enthuſiaſtic approbation. What was formerly a ſavage feſtival is now ſcarcely endured as a political commemoration, and we ſee her public councils, even in the firſt tranſpors of their unexampled victories, hailing them as the harbingers of univerſal tranquillity.

But a peace alone would not ſecure Great Britain, in the preſent ſtate of the world, as the war has left it. She muſt prepare to redeem herſelf from her burdens, and from the corruptions which occaſioned them, by the nobleſt acts of fortitude and ſelf-denial, and by the moſt rigid ſyſtem of œconomy: every expence that is uſeleſs or inconvenient muſt be put down: the reſources of the country muſt be ſifted and examined to the bottom, and the revenue upheld by their moſt judicious application. But no ſkill in finance, nor

even

Digitized by Google

even integrity in a miniſter, can accompliſh theſe great objects, without creating in all ranks and claſſes of the people a deep and warm intereſt in the ſupporting additional burdens, and an enthuſiaſm in the conſtitution which protects them in their rights.

This ſtate of things is abſolutely incompatible with the whole internal ſyſtem of policy adopted by the preſent adminiſtration. It is in vain to think of even attempting the renovation of our country upon a principle of diſtruſt and terror of the very inhabitants which compoſe it. The only remedy againſt mobs is to extend to the multitude the full privileges of a people. To give awful dignity and ſecurity to the Commons of England, let every man who has a houſe over his head have the proud ſenſation that he is preſent in Parliament by deputation. The alarm of ſuch a change, even though made by Parliament itſelf in the benevolence and juſtice of its diſpenſations, has always appeared to me very extraordinary. But its reception with enlightened men is wholly unaccountable. The ſtrength and ſecurity of government, by the breadth of a popular baſis, is confirmed by all experience, and by the univerſal analogies of things.

When a government emanates from the whole people, when the delegation, which forms the balance to its wiſely fixed executive, is ſufficiently mutable to prevent an agency from degenerating into a controul, and ſufficiently extended to be the organ of univerſal will, the clubs and ſocieties and conventions which have

Digitized by Google

have frightened us out of our ſenſes, could not in the nature of things exiſt. When the people themſelves actually chuſe the popular branch of the legiſlature, that forms the controul upon the other parts of it, which are, for the wiſeſt purpoſes, put out of their own choice by other modifications, and where that choice is made for a very limited ſeaſon, upon what principle can rebellion exiſt againſt ſuch a Parliament, and who, in God's name, are to be the rebels? How can a people be brought to reſiſt a voluntary emanation from themſelves? By the operation of what vice or infirmity will they pull down the legiſlative organ of their own will? Even if ſuch a body ſhould occaſionally betray its truſt, the remedy is at hand without tumult or revolution; the agency expires by the forms of the conſtitution, and a better is appointed in its ſtead. The bad paſſions of men will, it is true, work up factions in the ſtate; but factions, where there is a broad and general repreſentation, are like waves which riſe in the ocean and ſink again inſenſibly into its boſom; it is only when confined and obſtructed that they daſh into foam, and deſtroy by the impetuoſity of their courſe.

This was preciſely the caſe in France.—Until there was a juſt and legitimate repreſentation of the people, controuling the other modifications of a government, no matter how conſtituted, clubs and knots of men ſpread terror and confuſion, and the people ſupported them; becauſe they were repreſented in thoſe clubs and factions, or not repreſented at all. They had

Digitized by Google

had no other ſecurity againſt tyranny than by a general organization of their authority, and the public humours therefore ſettled into factions. For this ſtate of ſociety there was no poſſible cure but legitimate power proceeding from the people. When force and violence were attempted, they only inflamed the diſtemper; but when the cauſe was removed by a genuine organ of the public choice, the clubs decayed and fell to pieces. Miſguided men were no doubt diſpoſed to continue them, but the people *at large*, having then no longer any intereſt in ſupporting their authorities, they were every where put down without a ſtruggle: and now, whatever faults or imperfections may be aſcribed to the government of France, it is certainly not one of them, that its operations are controuled or menaced by meetings of the people; and if its authority is to be imputed to great power and tyranny, it ſhews at leaſt that the ſtrength of government has nothing to fear from an extended repreſentation.

This is not the form or faſhion of ſociety in a particular nation, or in a ſingular conjuncture, but it is the univerſal law which pervades civil life throughout all regions and in all ages; and not civil life only, but the life of all created things, and the exiſtence of the whole material world. It is the free tranſmiſſion of that, which conſtitutes ſubſtances throughout all the parts which compoſe them, that alone can preſerve them.

Digitized by Google The

The humours of the human body, which occacaſionally deform its beauty, and impair its ſtrength, are not in themſelves diſeaſes, but indications that the body is generally diſeaſed: they are but the poiſoned ſymptoms of imperfect circulation, and the cure muſt be conducted accordingly. If their diſperſion is attempted without touching their cauſes, they diſappear, it is true, from the ſurface, and the medical, like the political quack, is applauded; but the true phyſician diſcovers only in this apparent reſtoration the ſure prognoſtic of death. Science, therefore, commences its reformation in the primary ſeat of vital movements; it ſets free the juices throughout all the capillaries of the body, and without a knife, or an embrocation, the ſores inſenſibly dry up, convert themſelves into duſt, and the lazar riſes from his couch. In the ſame manner, when the ſap which belongs to the entire ſtructure of the vegetable kingdom, is obſtructed in its courſe to the remoteſt branches of every plant that grows, it is not merely theſe defrauded branches which periſh; the trunk itſelf that monopolizes the nouriſhment of which it only ought to be the conduit, is ſpeedily encruſted with canker, and conſumed to its very root. Even the inanimate maſs of matter exiſts by the ſame rules. It is ſome univerſal though hidden union which holds its ſubſtances together; and whenever from any cauſe it is impeded or deſtroyed, their ſurfaces become covered with deleterious incruſtations, which, in proceſs of time, will diſſolve the hardeſt of them, until their atoms are ſcattered to the wind.

Digitized by Google

The

The ruling principle of the preſent moment is moſt naturally the terror of revolution, and wiſdom, therefore, directs our view to its cauſes; becauſe, without that conſideration, we may be running upon danger in our very zeal to eſcape from it. The cauſes of revolutions are within reach of every body, if pride would ſtoop to regard them. Whatever may be the original defects of civil eſtabliſhments, hiſtory affords few examples of violent changes (otherwiſe than by conqueſt), except when they groſsly degenerate from their principles, whatever they may be. All primitive governments are, to a great degree, founded in ſocial freedom, however defectively it may be ſecured. A ſpirit of liberty and equality pervaded even the vaſſalage of the feodal conquerors of Europe. Undue delegation of power and occaſional abuſe of it only ſerved to rouſe unadulterated man to an early and timely aſſertion of himſelf. The former changes in ſociety were, therefore, dignified and merciful. But corruption brutifies and debaſes; her votaries are ſtupidly inſenſible, and, as this contagion muſt, in the nature of things, ſtop ſhort of the great maſs of the people, the multitude ſeparated from their ſuperiors are of courſe the indignant reformers; and the lazy, profligate, bloated abuſers of rational and uſeful eminence are knocked on the head like ſeals whom the tide has left ſleeping upon the ſhore.

This is the clue to the wonders that ſurround us. Human nature is preciſely the ſame. It is the cor-

 Digitized by Google ruption

ruption of eſtabliſhments, ten thouſand times worſe than the rudeſt dominion of tyranny, which has changed, and is changing, the face of the modern world. The old parliament of France had no reſemblance to the modern parliament of Paris when monarchy fell to the ground. The States of Holland, under the immortal Prince of Orange, were loſt in every thing but the name when the French croſſed the Waal to deſtroy them, and it was not the freezing of the river that ſecured the conqueſt, but becauſe the hearts of the inhabitants were frozen by the abuſes of their government. In the ſame manner the Netherlands paſſed away from the Emperor. The *joyeuſe entrée* of the good Duke of Burgundy had been for centuries nibbled away by monopolies and reſtrictions before the Belgians even murmured againſt his authority. This venerable conſtitution was offered to be reſtored at laſt: but the offer was too late, as all offers muſt neceſſarily be when they proceed from thoſe who can no longer keep what they are ready from neceſſity to grant. Such were the conceſſions of Charles the Firſt to his parliament; of Great Britain to America; and of France, when her notables were aſſembled. Even the horſe knows when his rider ſtrokes his neck from affection or from fear.

The ſubject propoſed is now brought to its concluſion. Deeply impreſſed with its importance, of which indeed every hour that paſſes is furniſhing ſome new and awful example, I have given my obſervations,

Digitized by Google

ſervations, defective as they are, openly and without reſerve to the public, and I have ventured to ſubſcribe them with my name, at the riſk of the many calumnies which they are ſure to draw down upon me. My opinions concerning the advantage of a radical reformation in the repreſentation of the Houſe of Commons have been expreſſed from no diſreſpect for that high aſſembly, to which I owe a reverence and a duty, both as a member and a ſubject, but from a moſt ſincere and equal attachment to all the branches of the conſtitution. They may long flouriſh together, if they will always be contented to hold their own places in the ſyſtem which gave them birth. It can only be from an attempt to change or to enlarge them that a ſcuffle may enſue, in which all of them may be uſurped.

I am perfectly aware that every thing I have written will be ineffectual for the preſent; the cloud that hangs over us is as yet too thick to be penetrated by a light ſo feeble. It is much eaſier to ſcourge vice than to diſſipate error. Indolent indifference, timorous inactivity, and miſtaken virtue, are great cauſes of our preſent misfortunes; they apply to ten times the number of thoſe who are materially affected by ſelf-intereſt; and of the three the laſt is by far the moſt miſchievous; not only becauſe principles of energy are more dangerous than thoſe which incline men to be paſſive, but becauſe there is ſomething awful and faſcinating in virtue, however miſguided, and however deſtructive from its errors. The

Digitized by Google truth

truth is, we were ſuddenly placed by the moſt extraordinary events in a new ſituation, both as it regarded our moral feelings as good men, and our prudence as enlightened members of civil life.

The conjuncture I allude to, under any circumſtances, would have been a ſtumbling block to many; coming in critical aid of the deſperate projects of ambition and corruption, it became for a ſeaſon irreſiſtible; it ſtill continues to be dangerouſly powerful, but it will inſenſibly wear away. I have had a thouſand opportunities of obſerving its influence amongſt thoſe valuable claſſes of men who take the deepeſt intereſt in whatever appears to be connected with the moral order of the world. Propenſities ſo perfectly worthy deſerve a greater reward than man can confer on them; but they are apt, without great caution, to lead men beyond the ſphere of their duties, as every thing muſt neceſſarily be which is wholly beyond the limits of our contracted powers. The extravagance of pious but miſdirected zeal may work as much evil as the outrages of impiety. Men become mad from arrogance and preſumption, when they preſume to decide upon conſequences far beyond the reach of human forecaſt, and they become wicked to a degree, from which nothing but madneſs ought to ward off puniſhment, when they ſupport in their own country the groſſeſt abuſes, and the moſt ruinous waſte of the reſources of future ages, under the pretence of arreſting thoſe mighty and never ceaſing changes of the world, the conſequences of which no mortal

Digitized by Google

ſtrength

ſtrength can ſubdue, and which are as much beyond our capacities as they are foreign to our concerns.

From ſuch extraordinary conjunctures much better fruits may be gathered by a modeſt conſideration of them, as furniſhing the moſt awful and inſtructive leſſons for our conduct and reformation.

The French revolution, by ſhewing the irreſiſtible force of popular zeal and fury, may be expected to teach the regular governments of the world to beware how they provoke them by acts of injuſtice and oppreſſion, or by the gradual ſliding of political eſtabliſhments from the great protective ends of their inſtitutions. It may inculcate the wiſdom of moderate and inſenſible changes, as the mutable and periſhable nature of all ſocial eſtabliſhments may require them; and, above all, it may remind them of a truth quite univerſal and incontrovertible, but which ſeems to be too little adverted to, that when men are really happy under their governments, they never puſh their reaſonings upon political *theories* to extravagant concluſions, much leſs combine to reduce them by force into *practice*, at the hazard of all the horrors and ſufferings, which to ſome extent or other, every revolution muſt unavoidably produce.

To the governed the leſſon may not be the leſs momentous. It may ſerve as a warning to the inhabitants of all nations not *ſuddenly* to puſh the reformations of ſociety beyond the pitch of prudence and

Digitized by Google

and the analogies of experience; to conſider government as a practical thing; rather to build upon the foundations laid by the united wiſdom of ſocial man, improving upon the model by the riſing lights of the world, than to aſſume at once the exerciſe and practice of their full rights MERELY BECAUSE THE RIGHTS UNQUESTIONABLY BELONG TO THEM, inſtead of conſenting by inſenſible and peaceable operations to adopt ſuch changes and modifications of popular authority as may anſwer the full purpoſes of ſocial ſecurity and happineſs: but, above all, it may ſerve, as with the voice and force of thunder, to ſink deep into the hearts both of princes and people never to ſuffer their ſupport of human authority, or their zeal for the correction of its abuſes, however deſirable or important, to ſuperſede that ſyſtem of benevolence towards our fellow-creatures, the firſt and grand precept of our religion, whoſe obſervance is the key-ſtone of human happineſs, and whoſe breach is the ſource of all the miſeries which afflict and agitate the world.

Theſe are the leſſons which it may be expected to teach to every nation as conſidered by itſelf. For the regulation of ſeparate communities in their concerns with others, future ages will probably, looking back to the diſtracted councils of Great Britain during this unparalleled criſis, have reſort to them as a negative example of prudent government. It will teach particular ſtates to confine their interferences with the affairs of other countries within

Digitized by Google the

the bounds which are calculated to ſecure their own territories and independence. It will cauſe them to beware how they arrogantly aſſume to themſelves againſt the firſt laws of nature, and the obvious plans of Providence in the progreſſive changes of the world, the right of arreſting the awful and majeſtic courſe of freedom contending againſt uſurped authority, whatever may be the fury or irregularity of its courſe. It will alſo ſerve to remind the rulers of nations in the neighbourhood of changes ariſing from abuſes of authority, that abuſes of authority are the conſtant forerunners of changes, and the cauſes by which they are produced.

There is one further and laſt example to be derived to future ages from the preſent fortunes of Great Britain, which it reſts with the people of England to furniſh to the world. By coming forward at this moment with prudence and with order, with a ſubmiſſion which wiſdom dictates to every people to their eſtabliſhed government, but with a firmneſs which at the ſame time reminds that government, that it exiſts only for their benefit and by their conſent, they may yet preſerve their country. This majeſtic and commanding conduct, will demonſtrate to future times, and to other nations, that there is no ſtate of adverſity which ought to reduce a great people to deſpair; that national adverſity cannot even exiſt for any long ſeaſon, but from wicked miſgovernment, and ſhameful ſubmiſſion to it; and that the

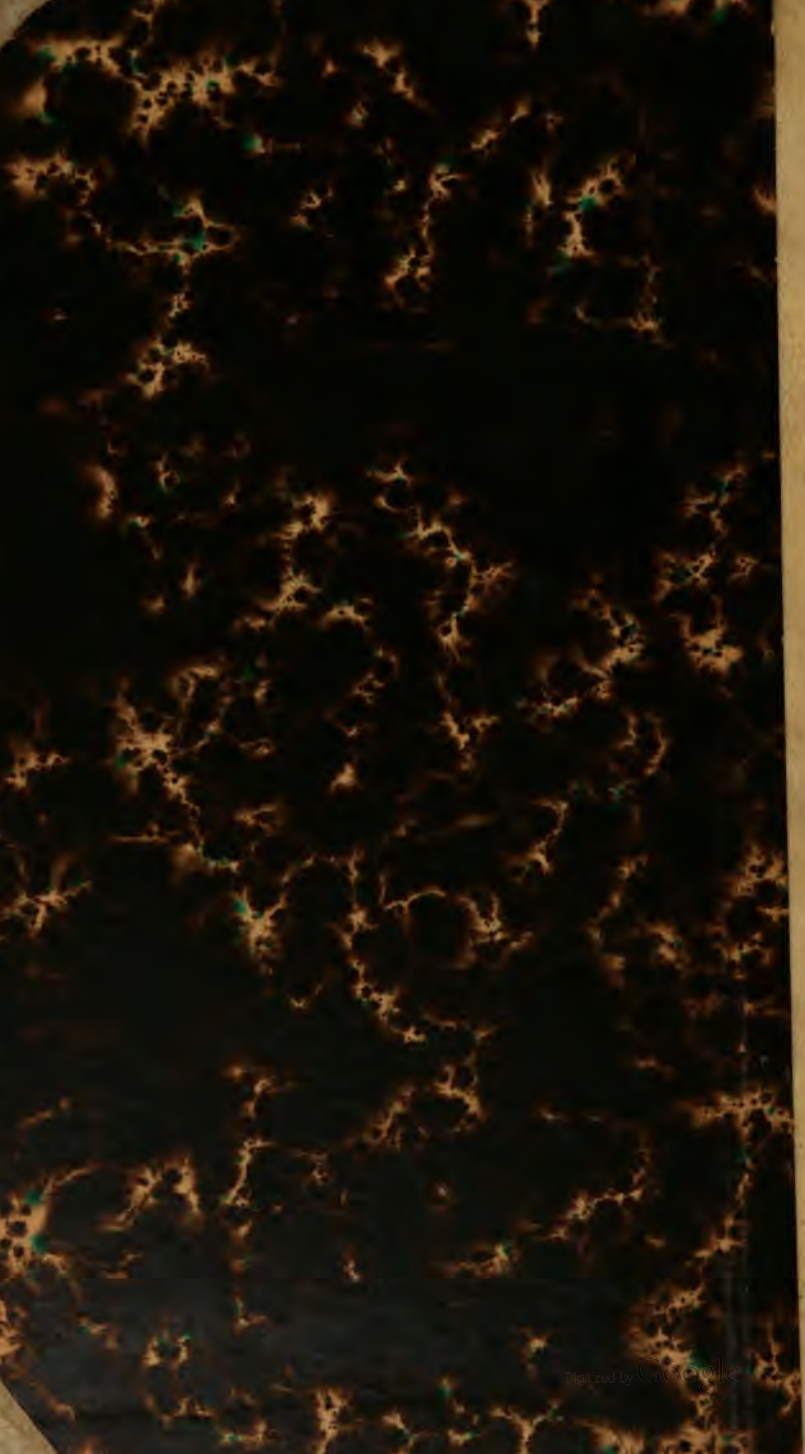
Digitized by Google

advantage of our free conſtitution (well worthy of all the blood that has been ſhed for it; and which may yet be ſhed to preſerve it) is, that it poſſeſſes within itſelf the means of its own reformation; inſuring to its ſubjects an exemption from revolution, the worſt of all poſſible evils, except that confirmed eſtabliſhment of tyranny and oppreſſion for which there is no other cure.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google